

THE KINGDOM OF
CHRIST UPON EARTH

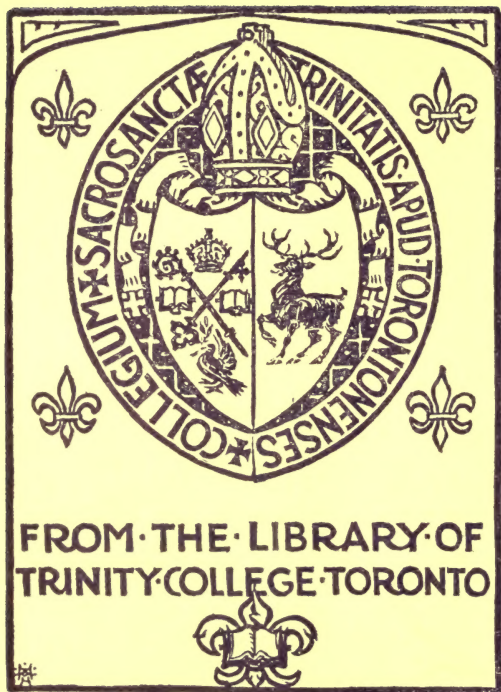
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BISHOP WEBB



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THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST
UPON EARTH

BY THE RIGHT REV. BISHOP WEBB

Late Dean of Salisbury

Formerly Bishop of Bloemfontein and Grahamstown

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THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST UPON EARTH

AND OTHER SERMONS

BY THE RIGHT REVEREND
BISHOP WEBB

*late Dean of Salisbury
formerly Bishop of Bloemfontein and Grahamstown*

WITH A PREFACE

BY THE REV.
GEORGE BODY, D.D.

Canon Missioner of the Diocese of Durham

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TO
ALL THOSE WHOM THE BISHOP
LOVED AND TAUGHT AND PRAYED FOR DURING
HIS MINISTRY ON EARTH
(AND WHOM HE SURELY STILL REMEMBERS)
THESE SERMONS,
FOUND IN MANUSCRIPT AMONGST HIS PAPERS,
ARE DEDICATED

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SEP 26 1984

PREFACE

I AM asked to Preface this book of Sermons, and the request is one I cannot refuse to comply with. My great reverence and personal affection for Bishop Webb make such a refusal impossible.

But even more than this my strong conviction that these sermons will be of great value makes this compliance a duty. I believe Bishop Webb to be one of the greatest teachers of Christian truth in our day. At least he has been so to me. I owe him a deeper debt of gratitude than I can express. No one has ever helped me more as a teacher of theology.

He had no new revelation to voice, or truth to teach. He taught the Catholic Faith, "the faith once for all delivered to the saints," the faith as it is revealed by and in the Incarnation of the Eternal Word, the Faith taught and confessed "everywhere in every Church." But that Faith

he had received into his inner nature, and out of it he spake it. The one Faith comes to us always conditioned in its presentation in Christian teaching. It is conditioned by the mental conditions of every age. The Faith of the first century is the Faith of the twentieth, but there is a contrast in its form of teaching. It is conditioned by the varied nationalities which are in the Catholic Church. The Faith of the West, of the East, of the Anglo-Saxon race, is one in its essential features. But its expression is conditioned by the varying characteristics of its peoples. Hence there is an Anglo-Catholic theology which is the result of the special characteristics of our race and of the providential education of its Church by God. It is this Anglo-Catholic theology that Bishop Webb saw with such fulness and distinctness, as it found expression in his vocal and written teaching.

For the fact that the Faith comes to us through conditioned teaching is to be seen in its individual teachers. This we recognize in the character of individuality of all the writers of the Holy Scriptures, and also of all the great historic teachers of the Catholic Church. Probably no

two minds ever apprehended the Faith in a precisely similar way. This arises from the twofold fact that no one mind here, where "we see in part," ever fully grasps the Revelation of infinite Truth given us in the Incarnate Lord. Also that each individual's grasp of that Revelation is conditioned by his mental characteristics. So in Bishop Webb's teaching there is an individual form of teaching which gives him a special place among the Anglo-Catholic teachers of our day.

The value of his teaching, however, does not wholly depend on its form of presenting the Faith. It depends to a great degree on the personality of the teacher—a personality clearly to be recognized in these sermons. They are the utterances of a Prophet: the words of one who saw visions and who spake as he saw. No two men saw truth in different aspects more than Bishop Westcott and Bishop Webb did. But they were both of them Prophets—"seers who saw visions of God," and voiced them. And in every age history testifies to the effectiveness of the Prophet's ministry as of one who speaks for God as coming from God. I at least have been conscious of this in both these men.

The Sermons are in the handwriting of Bishop Webb himself. In a very special sense, then, in this book he "yet speaketh." May it be with effectual power through the benediction of the Holy Ghost.

GEORGE BODY.

THE COLLEGE, DURHAM,
July 2, 1909.

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THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST AND THE
WORLD

I

“ Let all the house of Israel therefore know assuredly, that God hath made Him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom ye crucified.”—ACTS ii. 36.

SPEAKING generally, the kingdom of God, or kingdom of Heaven, may be understood (i) as that order of created life and being in which the Messiah, being no other than the Lord Jehovah and the Son of David, rules and reigns as the Lamb in the midst of the Throne of the Most High.

(ii) Within this vast order throughout which the once for all Incarnate and crucified Son of Man is supreme, He bears a special relation to the Church, which is His body and in a peculiar sense His own kingdom—the kingdom of God’s dear Son, the very heart, the capital city and sanctuary of His empire.

(iii) From a third point of view, the kingdom of God is the reign of Christ and His Spirit freely accepted first within the society and

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fellowship of His elect people and as the reign of His righteousness truth and peace within the soul of the individual saint, who has yielded himself to the claims of God.

It is a kingdom of the present, which has already come, and it is a kingdom of the future, which is coming and is still to come in glory with its King revealed in His beauty.

In this instruction we will confine ourselves to the thought of the man Christ Jesus, in His abiding and glorified humanity, administering all government and authority in this far-reaching comprehensive order under which angels and authorities and powers are made subject to Him, and in which all things, of whatsoever sort or kind, or in whatever region or grade of existence, are put under His dominion. In the kingdom so understood in its largest sense the emphasis is upon the person of the Ruler; and the answer is given to the question, Who is ruling in the universe? our attention being called not so much now to that other question, What is the King's own city or palace or treasury of regalia and precious things? With this question we propose to deal another time.

And here in this one theme which we are now considering, there is cause enough for joy and wonder and praise, as well as for reverence and holy fear. The reins of the universe are held in the hands once nailed to the cross; the plan for the guidance of the course of the world is gathered up in the Head that was crowned with thorns and is expressed in its history; the love that now comes forth in compassion to the innumerable multitudes of peoples and tongues and languages is the human love of the heart that was pierced by the soldier's spear.

Begin with the widest circle of worlds that have been made or are in the making, and pass through all ranks of angels that excel in strength, over the tenderest and mightiest forms of created being, and then through the very midst of all races of mankind on this earth or in the world of spirits, until at the very inmost and central spring and source of life you meet *Him*, Who wears your form, and speaks with human voice and was born of the Virgin. He it is Who upholds the whole, each and all in place; Whose mind is travelling continually through the vast system, and is aware of the need of the most

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distant and insignificant. So that *without Him* nothing happens anywhere to anything, and it is He Who through all time and place is carrying out the eternal purpose of God, which is committed to His charge for execution and fulfilment, because He is both Son of Man and Son of God and died for us. Is it not good news for us that the whole world is under *human* government, so that in every experience of life we are face to face with our own Saviour and Lord, the very one we would have chosen to reign over us and all mankind, to represent us on the throne as well as before it?

And while this is so, we are not thereby removed further from the eternal Father—but brought all the nearer to Him. Does not Christ say, “I am set down with the Father in His throne,” “The Father abiding in Me doeth His works”? This human reign of the Son is the very outcome of the counsel of the wisdom and love of the Father who had declared of old, “I have set My Son upon My holy hill of Zion.” So He is our Lord and Lord of all to the glory of God the Father.

And this fore-ordained and momentous purpose

of the Divine will was not brought about without warfare and conflict. The position of mediatorial sovereign of the universe, and more particularly of this world, was apparently just the one which it was the ambition of the mighty Prince of this lower order, so constituted before his fall, to secure for himself. It may have been his probation when he excelled in glory and beauty among the sons of God, to be called to do homage to One, Who for a while was to be made a little lower than the angels, and of Whom the voice from the throne should say, "*Let all the angels of God worship Him.*"

Hence there was war in heaven. But by the cross, on which He was assailed by the power of darkness, the rightful King and true Lord of Hosts triumphed over the principalities and spiritual hosts of wickedness. The atoning death was the very ground of His title as Man to the moral government of the world. And now, having failed to keep Him from the throne of Heaven, it is Satan's chief endeavour to hinder His being owned as Sovereign by His brethren upon earth. His efforts are directed to withdrawing the allegiance of even Christian nations

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and in luring individual hearts into apostasy from their King—to make men arrange their life and action apart from His law and without reference to His will.

Yet knowing all that he does know (for the devils believe and tremble), and the Devil is no fool, though guilty of the supremest folly, how dare such an enemy and the usurper, creature that he is, dream of thwarting the imperial will of the Son of God? It may be that he reckons upon some triumph still being won for his envy and pride because of the mysterious economy in which He Who upon earth endured the contradiction of sinners against Himself is still content as Man to accomplish His purposes, restraining the attributes of His Divine nature to allow full scope to the operation of His human nature. He sees that it is under the reign of the Son of Man that this world must work out its appointed task, and that evil is to be vanquished not yet by the irresistible force of Almightyness, but by the grace of God working in and by man. On this he presumes; the more so because in executing the Divine behests the Lamb who is King of kings is still dependent for the victorious pro-

gress of the kingdom of God upon the faith and loyalty of His brethren. It is against these, then, that Satan directs his attack, not, alas! altogether without effect, if haply he may seem to win some advantage over Him that sitteth upon the throne.

It is this holding back of the power of the Godhead, that His mercy and forbearance may have free course, which tempts the children of men to imagine that the personal reign of God has given place to impersonal forces, that there is no such thing for us practically as an energetic, loving Providence, and that evil is almost as strong and omnipotent as good.

Yet Jesus is on the throne—and He will continue to reign, even amongst enemies, until He hath put all things under His feet. Our part is to hold steadfastly to the truth that the greatest fact in the whole world is that there is a Divine Person, one like unto a Son of Man, Who rules, directs and controls all affairs of heaven and earth, and though He seems even to be asleep when the waves rage horribly, yet He remaineth a King, a King strong and patient, ever faithful and true.

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It is with this great wonder of our present age and dispensation that psalmist and prophet were chiefly engaged in their visions of the counsels of God. "I will raise unto David a righteous branch and a King shall reign and prosper," was the message of Jeremiah. "I saw," said Daniel, "in the night visions, and behold there came with the clouds of heaven one like a son of man, and He came even to the Ancient of days, and they brought Him near before Him. And there was given Him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all the peoples, nations and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed." And how full the Psalms are of the great hope of the King Whose dominion shall be from sea to sea, Whose name shall endure for ever and in Whom men shall be blessed.

And as His kingdom was the promise of the past, it is the great reality of the Church to-day. How happy are we to be living under the very shadow of such a Throne. For us the heavens are opened and the angels of God ascend and descend upon the Son of Man. His kingly

human form is the centre to which all worship is addressed and from whence all authority and grace are derived.

If we take up a paper and read the annals of the day, the story of events great and small happening at home and abroad—though interest and sympathy, and even anxiety, may be intense—we are not greatly moved, because He is on the throne and sees the end from the beginning. It is this fact that the Church witnesses to the world by setting up her spires and towers; and, above all, within her sanctuaries by her worship and in all her services. Not alone the Holy Eucharist, but the Litany, for instance, is one great act of homage to Jesus as King. It is, as you know, to Him that we appeal, after the opening suffrages, throughout as the “good Lord” Who has redeemed us by His precious blood, Whose Incarnation and death and glorious resurrection unites us to Him now, as the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world. We address Him as absolute Lord of nature, able to deliver us from plague and famine and earthquake, and to preserve for us the kindly fruits of the earth. We beseech Him as having control

over Providence, in such things as concern us, like sedition, rebellion, war, government and international concord.

In the spiritual world He also can deliver us from all deadly sin, and can give us a heart to love and dread Him, as well as true repentance, forgiveness and the grace of His Holy Spirit. No province of our experience is outside His authority and rule, except, it may be—which God forbid—our own wills. Would we seek exemption from His gentle bonds and cast away His cords which bind us to His throne, withdrawing our hearts or homes, or schools, or pleasure, or business haunts from His rule, then we must bear the sad consequences of our utterly foolish disloyalty and base ingratitude: "If He be angry, yea but a little, blessed are all they that put their trust in Him."

As the reign of our King was the hope of the past and is the fact of the present to which we are witnesses this day, so the manifestation of the King, of Christ in Royalty, not only to His Church, but also to the nations, will be the event of the future—for which our Advent services are a preparation. "When the Son of Man shall

come in His glory and all the angels with Him, then shall He sit on the throne of His glory; and before Him shall be gathered all the nations." What shall the King then answer and say to us and our nation?—Will we not *now* have Him to reign over us and remember *now* that He is identified even with the meanest of His brethren and ours? This is the vital interest at the back of all political questions. Shall we not also be obedient to His royal command, Who, claiming all authority in heaven and upon earth, has bidden us make disciples of all the nations—giving us the all-sufficient promise that to the very end of the age and to the ends of the earth He will be with us all the days in all His love and power?

So shall we sing the song of loyal devotion in our hearts as with our lips—

"Righteous and true are Thy ways, Thou King of the ages : all the nations shall come and worship before Thee, for Thy righteous acts have been made manifest. Thou art the King of Glory : and of Thy kingdom there shall be no end."

THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST AS HEAD
OVER HIS CHURCH

II

“The Father of glory . . . gave Him to be the head over all things to the Church, which is His body.”—EPHES. i. 17, 22, 23.

IN the first part of this verse the amazing but gracious fact is declared that the crucified and risen Christ is head over all things. The present order of the kingdom is distinguished from past dispensations in having as its immediate ruler, in its central Throne, now become the Throne of God and of the Lamb, the eternal Son in the form and nature of man. This counsel of the Divine will has become a reality within the last two thousand years—it may be after millions of ages; and this is good news for the world: “The Lord Jesus is King; the earth may be glad thereof. Tell it out among the heathen.” It makes all the difference to men that they are under the reign of One Who taketh away the sin of the world, even though they may not yet be

members of the Church. Under the shadow of His throne of grace, in every nation he that worketh righteousness and cometh to the light and doeth the truth may be accepted of God; the merciful ones will be blest in the great assize as having shown kindness to the King Himself, Whom as yet they had not known.

A Roman officer like Cornelius can be addressed by God's angel as one whose prayers and offerings "had gone up as a memorial before God." The Holy Spirit is moving over souls which are not yet of the Church visible on earth. This large hope we embrace heartily and thankfully. But yet we are sure, in comparison with the privileged standing in the body of Christ, the least in this kingdom of God is greater than even a St. John the Baptist.

So then the great truth that the Son of Man reigns as Head over all things is by no means the *whole* truth. If we stopped short here, we should keep back a very material part of the whole counsel of God. Our appeal to Scripture would be partial and very incomplete. In the majestic ascent of St. Paul's thought in this chapter to the crowning glory of the Christ we

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are led up past the resurrection and ascension, and beyond the wonder of His relation to the universe as its King, to the position which He occupies as head of the Church. The plan of salvation issues through the power of the resurrection in this climax of the mystery or open secret of God, disclosed especially by St. Paul : the Lord Christ is sovereign of the world, but *to the Church* He is also united as the head is to the body. All principalities and powers, as well as races of mankind, are His subjects ; but in His Church men are also members of His body ; they are fellow-citizens with the saints and of the household of God ; they are stones of the temple and sanctuary which God is building. This unique relation of the Church to God in Christ is also emphasized as a union of which holy marriage is the closest, though still incomplete, figure and type. The Church is the characteristic portion of that kingdom, which the Lord preached as near at hand and the apostles as having come. Its visible organism with its invisible life is suggested by such parables of the kingdom as those of the mustard seed, the tares and the wheat, the marriage supper. And in the

exercise of His royal will the Lord has appointed its visible means of entrance, its sacrament of fellowship, its administrators who should have the keys of the kingdom. Not to speak of other numerous significant allusions in the Acts and Epistles, it is clear that when St. Paul writes to the Colossians of the thanks due to God the Father Who had, in pursuance of His Divine election, translated them into the kingdom of the Son of His love, he refers to the glory of this present membership in the Church of Christ. And, indeed, granting that there is a Divine society of Persons in the eternal Trinity itself to begin with, it is only reasonable in the heavenly order that there should be the Lord's Society, the Church, to end with on earth, the Incarnation being the link and bond between the two.

1. Now of what sort of Church are these mysterious and excellent things spoken? It was the one Church, which, although the head and a daily increasing proportion of members in Paradise through the centuries might be out of sight, was also actually on this earth, whether at Ephesus, or Corinth, or in Galatia. It was just because they were already in and of the body

CHRIST HEAD OVER HIS CHURCH 21

of Christ that the apostle entreats Church men and women, at these and other centres, to be truthful and pure and humble and charitable. Because they were already citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem, known as such through fellowship with the apostles and by communion in the Body and Blood of the Lord, they were entreated to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith they were called in a truly spiritual and religious life. They are never addressed as persons who had themselves created their Church through their own faith or good works, or who, by a resolution of a majority of voters, had become a Church; but as chosen of God to be translated into the kingdom of the Son of His love, and to be therein citizens of the Divine commonwealth founded by the Eternal Will and come down from God out of heaven.

“We are sometimes asked to think,” said Archbishop Temple in 1887, “that the Church only exists in the union of believers, and has no reality of its own. Now, it is perfectly clear that in the New Testament the idea of the Church is not this. Men talk sometimes as if a Church could be instituted by Christians coming together and

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uniting themselves in one body for the purpose. Men speak as if Christians came first and the Church after ; as if the origin of the Church was in the wills of the individual Christians who composed it. But, on the contrary, throughout the teaching of the apostles we see that it is the Church that comes first and the members of it afterwards. In the New Testament the kingdom of heaven is already in existence and men are invited into it. The Church takes its origin not in the will of man, but in the will of the Lord Jesus Christ. He sent forth His apostles ; the apostles received their commission from Him ; they were not organs of the congregation ; they were ministers of the Lord Himself. They came first and the members came afterwards. Everywhere men are called in ; they do not come in and make the Church by coming. They are called into that which already exists ; they are recognized as members when they are within ; but their membership depends upon their admission, and not upon their constituting themselves a body in the sight of the Lord."

2. And the Church which thus began in Jerusalem and thence spread throughout the

world and was everywhere a visible society, a city set on a hill, with its earthly as well as heavenly reality of life, was not yet the ideal Church (which the Epistle says will be one day presented without spot or blemish), except in the making. By and by all things that offend and whatsoever maketh a lie will be cast out; and meantime, as the Lord has led us to expect, tares and wheat will be found side by side within His field until the end of the age.

3. But for all this it was the very Church which the Lord loved, and out of love would rebuke and chasten—the Church of the living God, for which He gave Himself and purchased with His own blood. Never could she become the Bride and the Holy City having the glory of God unless He had loved her as she was and will love her into being what He would have her to be. And it is this Church which we too shall greatly love if we have the mind of Christ and His apostles. There must be something very wrong with our religion if our love is cold towards an object which Christ loves with the love of the bridegroom for the bride, of the

patriot for his country, of the eldest son for his father's house, and also with the immeasurable, unfathomable love, stronger than death and tenderer than a mother, of the Divine heart itself.

But where now is this Church of God, commended by the devotion of psalmist and prophet, apostles and martyrs, and most of all by the love of the Son of God Himself, to our loyalty and affection? It is not only in heaven above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God, nor alone in the depths of the unseen and invisible world where the faithful are at rest—but it is “very nigh thee,” in your very midst, and most worthy of your enthusiasm and self-sacrifice. For us it is no other than the “*Ecclesia Anglicana*” of Magna Charta, our own Church of England. What the Church of Jerusalem, of Ephesus, or Corinth was for St. Paul and the Christians of his day—the body of Christ and the kingdom of God's dear Son—no other and nothing less than this to us should be our English Church—not the whole Church, nor the Church perfected, but, as the Ordination Service puts it, the spouse and body of Christ, the society of the

Lord. How good the Lord God of our fathers has been in preserving such an heritage for us and our children ! Its continuous life has been maintained by life from the head, ministered through the proper joints and bands and by commission to the chief pastors derived from the apostolic college. And this commission has been most carefully guarded, as Archbishop Temple reminded us again, not in order to establish a caste mediating between Christ and His people, but to secure the oneness and identity of our Church of to-day with that body to which Christ promised His presence until the end of the world.

It is a Church the dearer to us, and we may dare to say, the dearer to Him, just because it has been saved by His grace, on the brink of disaster, from many perils. In the long process of the Reformation, lasting from 1509 to 1662, its very being was threatened more than once. "One party, if it could, would have destroyed the national character of the Church and put it in subjection to a foreign prelate, whilst the other, imbued with the traditions of Geneva or Zürich, would have destroyed its Church

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character and have cut off its continuity with the Church of Augustine and Anselm, and reduced it to a congregation of individuals." The Churchman of to-day may be confronted by the like perils over again, and he ought to have a clear idea both of the good which the Reformation under God did for us, as well as of the evil which it did *not* do. As Dr. Plummer puts it, in one of the best short histories of that period we have, "It made no break in the life of the Church of England. It destroyed no Church and it created no Church. It expelled no Church and it introduced no Church. It is certain that no English ruler, no English Parliament, thought of setting up a new Church. No other Church has ever displaced her, and if her children do their duty no other Church ever will."

"If the children do their duty." But this is just the question for us to-day. Are her children, no matter of what political party, prepared to do their duty? The Church at any given time is only what her individual sons and daughters make her. She has, indeed, always her store in Paradise, the memorials and the prayers of her

heroes and saints. But what do we see when we turn our gaze upon ourselves? Is our belief in the Church intelligent and real, such a belief as St. Paul prayed the Ephesians might have : "That we may know the things freely given to us in the kingdom"? Dean Goulburn was surely justified in saying, when he wrote of the article in the Creed : "How many thousands of persons there are who recite these words Sunday after Sunday, who nevertheless do not believe in the Holy Catholic Church, and in whose mouths this article of the faith is an idle word. They become easy victims of any popular error which may happen to be floating about in the theological atmosphere." This is again our very real danger now. Let us, then, be ready to give a reason for the hope that is in us as Churchmen, citizens of no meaner city than the heavenly Jerusalem which hath her foundations in the eternal purpose of the everlasting God.

And, what is better, let us be resolutely prepared even to suffer, if need be, perhaps nothing more tragic than vexation, if only by bearing quietly, as we can afford to, the accusation, sure

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to be made, of intolerance, bigotry or exclusiveness for the Church's sake—not because it is our Church, but because it is Christ's, Who cares for her more than ever we can do.

And, dear brethren, as lovers of our nation, let us believe that there is no force nor influence in the whole of our body politic so potent as the Church of England—for upholding the sense of the presence and reign of God, and for sustaining at the heart of our national life that kingdom of righteousness, peace and true liberty, divorced from which earth's mightiest empire must certainly perish.

Against the Church of Jesus Christ—we have His own word for it—no gates of hell shall ever prevail.

THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST AND
ETERNAL LIFE

III

“And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband.”—REV. xxi. 2.

BEFORE the vision is given to gladden the heart of the seer, a scene has passed before him which represents a climax in the progress of the kingdom of God. Under the administration of the Lamb from the midst of the Throne, which is the background of all that happens in earth or heaven, and the true meaning of all events in time or space, the authority of God has been vindicated through the fall of Babylon, the incarnate world power which had set it at nought. The Church has been finally separated from all that defileth or maketh a lie within or outside its body. And the issue of all the Lord's dealings with the world is that the Church is now ready to be openly presented before the Father and the universe for

her espousals, as the Lamb's wife, in everlasting union and fellowship with her Lord in the kingdom of glory. It is this consummation of the history of the ages which gives the open proof to all of the reign of the righteous King and the triumph of His loving purpose. The great multitude in heaven, whose voices are heard as the sound of many waters and mighty thunderings, proclaim this event as the occasion for their majestic outburst of praise: "The Lord God omnipotent reigneth: let us be glad and rejoice: let us give the glory to Him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come: His wife hath made herself ready."

We may think of the kingdom of God in one aspect as the personal mediatorial reign of Jesus Christ, in the nature and form of man, embracing the whole creation, and particularly the family of man; in another as that society of redeemed men, the *Church*, which is peculiarly His kingdom, with its special hymn of praise: "Unto Him that loved us and made us to be a kingdom and priests unto His God and Father"; and then there is the kingdom of God in a third sense, not in contrast, but essential to the reality

of the whole;—the kingdom of righteousness, of the spirit of joy and peace and resurrection-life and power; everlasting life, eternal life, is the aspect in which St. John mainly regards it. The character of this kingdom, the quality of this life, are embodied and exhibited in the leading features of life in the holy city drawn for us in a few vivid strokes of the great seer's pictures of the Lamb's Bride. Let us rapidly glance at these so clothed in form and picture, rather than in doctrinal passages, to find its principles in the forms and symbols which, after all, are not obscure. Its life is the highest conceivable because, though now hidden and within us, and waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God to be revealed, it flows from the very fount of Godhead, through the human nature of our Lord to every living part of His body, even as the river of the water of life comes from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the midst of the streets of the city.

It is a life such as we might expect from the Church being a living organism, which is something more than a collection of individuals—a living whole made up of divers living parts or

organs, each having its own function : *all together* having one common end which they share and serve. Each part has its own life : all share in the one life of the living whole, and become partakers of the Divine nature. St. Paul thought much about the Church of Christ as a great unity made up of many living units, having in Christ one great Head, Who Himself feels everything that happens to each member, as when He said to Saul, "I am Jesus Whom thou persecutest." In this body of Christ, with His Son as the head of it, God has realized the crown of His creation, and in it deals with redeemed humanity as one man.

In St. John's vision this unity is expressed under the two figures of the Bride and the City, the oneness being more emphasized in the former of these two as suggesting almost a single personality.

But let us look at the city first to see what it tells us of the principles of the life everlasting of the kingdom of God. It is so unlike a city ever seen on earth that it is evident that its form and fashion is meant to suggest only a heavenly reality, while at the same time that reality is

intended to meet and satisfy all true human aspirations and tendencies. From the time that Abraham looked for the city which hath the foundations, whose builder and maker is God, a city has been represented by psalmist and prophet, in the Epistle to the Hebrews and in this final revelation of God's purpose as the *divine ideal* for man. And that, too, in spite of the fact that a city has been always "first the ambition and then the despair of man." Even Babylon in all its forms, whether on the banks of the Euphrates or the Tiber, or the Seine or on the Thames, proves the truth of the ancient philosopher's description of man "as a social being" whose tendency is towards fellowship and mutual co-operation.

But over and over again experience seems to insist that a great city is a great evil. Yet in vain do we raise the cry to the workless crowds of "Back to the country"; for human nature, we find, is too strong. We may long to keep our cities small—still they grow—and all the while, notwithstanding the failures here, *God prepares for us a city*. Undoubtedly His city has within itself the perfection of all beauty now

dimly foreshadowed on earth—all loveliness in nature and art whether of country or town; all that man began life with in Paradise and all that he has ever reached through civilization. There is the tree of life, with its fruits and healing leaves, and the river of life; and there are also the kings of the earth, and the nations, each and all bringing their glory and honour into it. No splendour of which Babylon can boast, as worthy of man's dignity and wisdom, shall be lacking; but then it is a splendour all aglow and radiant with the light which is not of sun or earthly lamp, for the *Lamb*, and all that He stands for, as once dead and alive for evermore, is the light thereof. Its distinctive difference from the city of the world is that the *throne of God and of the Lamb is in It* and *not* in Babylon; and the Tabernacle of God is with men *here*, and *not there*; and hence these positive characteristics of its life have simply no meaning and no attraction for the unspiritual and non-religious man. He cannot even apprehend this imagery or the language of enthusiasm, which is in rapture with this manifested Presence, its central and abiding joy and

beauty. It is, however, the negative qualities of its life—what is told us of what is *not* there—which are often the first to appeal to our intelligence and earth-bound cravings. (a) *There shall be no more pain.* It has been well said, “If only we knew some spot of earth . . . of which it could be said ‘there pain is impossible,’ how we should strain and struggle, not to get thither ourselves, but to send thither this one or that whom we love.” Such a place we should at once call heaven.

(b) *And death shall be no more.*—The last enemy is abolished. Instead of it there is life—and more abundant life. See the kings of intellect and moral force and goodness, even their ornaments of glory consecrated to highest use, as they march with stately step to offer their gifts before the throne. Behold the streaming multitude how they keep holy day, glad to contribute of their good things, each as God hath blessed him, to the wealth and happiness of all. Neither shall the city lack its child-like ones, even if they be not quite the boys and girls of which the streets of Jerusalem of Zachariah’s prophecy were full, to sing hosannah to the

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Lord. Yes—the great impression it gives is of the victorious reign of life—and life without the curse, that is, without the effects of sin on human life;—its blight, its added sting, its darkening cloud over every home and city of earth, to hide the face of God.

Behold ! there shall be no more curse !

And therefore, as that is past and gone, His servants shall see His face—and in that sight the restless hungry soul of man is at last content with satisfying life and light—when I wake up after Thy likeness I shall be satisfied with it. But it is not a satisfaction of stagnation or satiety. For the sight of God calls forth the highest capacities of man in worship. If he has the vision of God man must needs adore. In worship which comes with the sight of God he summons forth all that can be imagined of wisdom and riches and strength and thanksgiving and blessing and honour and power to praise with all his might. There is always joy for man in the exercise of power, and no activity elicits such a fund of power as worship which is worthy.

Besides this joy of vision and worship, life

in that city, we see, means *service and ministry* before the Throne. We can understand this side of heavenly life better *now* perhaps than other glories that shall be revealed, because it will be the continuance of what is begun here and must have a beginning here if it is to be completed and perfected there. And to serve the Lord there will not only be perfect freedom, but a function of royalty. The citizens of that city shall be kings as well as servants, for they *shall reign*—one over five, another over ten cities somewhere in the kingdom of the Father. And through their service they shall also enter more fully into communion with their fellows who will share in the ministries and responsibilities of the kingdom “in love without a grain of selfishness, in faith without a spasm of doubt, in knowledge without a shadow of uncertainty.”

There remains that other aspect of this common life, at which we can only glance with utmost reverence and restraint. It seems to bring man so very near to his brethren and into such close intimacy with the Holy One.

The heavenly city, the new Jerusalem, is at the same time the *Lamb's wife*. And here, as one

has said, the great Christian idea of the Church finds its culmination and transfiguration. The individual citizens are regarded in this absolute oneness in Christ, *one body*, and perhaps in some mystery to be developed hereafter, as one personality, with a higher, deeper consciousness of the many in one. Yet the mystery is after all the fulfilling of the revelation given long ago through one of the earliest of the Hebrew prophets after the sad experience of his own home—

“I will betroth thee unto Me for ever: yea, I will betroth thee unto Me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving-kindness, and in mercies;” boldly re-asserted by Isaiah, “Thy Maker is thine Husband; the Lord of Hosts is His name.”

Truly eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor heart of man conceived the exceeding glory of this grace for which God has chosen His Church, having ordained the very life of His Christ to be His gift within her. This is the hope of glory hereafter to be manifested in that perfect order of the new heavens and new earth, in which this

true inner Life can be securely and completely expressed. Even such an election of this Church and its preparation, which seems to be the special work of God in this dispensation, may be not only for her own sake, but perhaps for a further end of giving effect to some counsels of loving-kindness, yet to be revealed in the ages that are coming. However that may be, it is true that in this her earthly life, as well as in her heavenly glory, the Church can fulfil a measure of her high calling: "Hearken, O Daughter, and consider and incline thine ear. Forget also thine own people and thy father's house. So shall the King have pleasure in thy beauty: He is thy Lord God, and worship thou Him."

Only let us be sure that in being drawn so near to God, we are near to fire—God grant that it be for us the fire of love—and yet if it be His will, we will not greatly fear the fire of temptation, if only we may abide with Him in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ. For He is ever faithful and true Who is King of kings and Lord of lords, and He has left as His promise to those

who strive and pray to be kept loyal and true to Him unto the end, "I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God, and mine own new name."

CHRIST IN THE MIDST OF THE
CHURCH

IV

“And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And having turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks (lampstands); and in the midst of the candlesticks one like unto a (the) Son of Man.”—REV. i. 12, 13.

I DESIRE now to fix the eyes of your mind upon the picture of our Lord drawn by the Holy Spirit, which stands as the frontispiece of the Book of the Revelation, the *picture of the living Christ in the midst of His Church*.

At the approaching Christmas season you will, no doubt see, on varieties of cards, books and almanacks, representations of what your Lord has actually been *once*—an Infant in His mother’s arms. And much blessing has assuredly come to the human race in loving care for children and honour for womanhood through familiarity with such memorials of the Incarnation. And even more spiritually helpful than the picture of the Infant Christ has been the likeness, engraven upon the heart no less than

in wood and painting, of our crucified Lord, to which penitent sinners and suffering souls and dying eyes have turned in remembrance of the atoning death and passion.

But, after all, without our forgetting how He became to us what He is, or that His Incarnation and death are of abiding and eternal significance, it is in fixing our hearts on what Christ is *now*, no longer the Babe of Bethlehem or dying for our sins, but risen and glorified on the throne and yet present and acting in *our midst*, that we shall be most true in our faith and imaginations to things as they *are*. And in order that we may be helped to a faith which is real, our Lord has given us by the Holy Ghost through His apostle a picture of Himself as He stands in our midst. It is a picture which appeals to the mind trained by faithful reading of the Bible, in the language of Hebrew type and symbol, and not one the details of which a modern artist could take over and put upon his canvas exactly as they are given in the vision. It avoids the danger of attempting any exact similitude lest the idea given by human words should be accepted as complete, but it suggests

through type and figure, a form and likeness corresponding to the eternal reality of the One, clothed with attributes human and Divine, Who is the First and the Last, Who became dead and is alive for evermore. The heart of the Church, His Bride, longs to think truly of her Lord as *He is now*, and to know what she is to expect in His dealings towards her to-day, and whether she can be in as close touch and fellowship with Him here and now as His disciples were whilst He was yet with them in the flesh. And the answer is given to these questions in this Revelation of the Lord.

You remember how St. John saw this great vision. Banished to Patmos, yet not outside the Church of Jesus, he was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, having his eyes open to see the things unseen of the kingdom of God. His attention is arrested by the sound of a great voice as of the trump of God, the great message of the kingdom still being proclaimed, the poor result of which was as yet only a few Churches founded by the apostles of the same kind as those which were under his supervision in Asia Minor. Then having turned towards the quarter

from whence the voice came, he sees *not* the Lord first of all, but seven golden lampstands, which perhaps without the gold apparent any one might see. St. John sees the seven lampstands (but not to begin with the One in the midst of them) just as Moses in the wilderness beheld the bush aflame and nothing more. It needs eyes anointed by the Spirit of the Lord to see the great Reality within the mystic circle of the Churches. The Church of God as it is in the world he sees first, and then in the midst of it, "One like unto the Son of Man." *Whose* the form is he has no sort of doubt. Surely it is everything for us to know where to find our Lord! We may *see* as yet with bodily eye only the seven lampstands, the visible Church, representing the Churches of St. John and the apostles. But there—*there* He is; and there He fulfils His ministry; and there He walketh up and down; and there we may meet Him, falling at His feet; and there we may feel the touch of His right hand. The Church in this world is the great sacrament of the presence of Christ, and must be so in the nature of things if it be His body and His temple. And because

of this intimate connection with the living Christ it is through the Church, as the most wonderful creation of His purpose of love, that to the principalities and powers in heavenly places is made known the manifold wisdom of God. This is why so much has been dared and suffered in the history of our own Church to secure identity with that Church of the apostles to which the Lord promised His presence, and in which St. John beheld Him walking up and down as its Priest and King. It is not a society in which at the first glance you can discern the Divine presence. It is not only that in every part of it, whether it be Ephesus or Smyrna, or the Church in England, or America, or India, or South Africa, you observe what is intensely human, but very much also which must be consumed by the brightness of His appearing, if the Church is to live before Him. He does not withdraw His presence even from Sardis or Laodicea until every appeal and effort which He can make is exhausted. If, therefore, in the light of this Revelation we look, and look intently, for the signs of His grace and resurrection power, we shall know of a truth that He is still

with us Whom we have learnt to know and love in the Gospels. He has found out a way of being with us, even with us in this age and place, within our reach, and ready to convey His own life to us through the touch of His humanity.

St. John recognized Him at once, whether by the tone of His voice, as Mary Magdalen did, or the glance of His eyes, or, which is most probable, as once by the Lake of Galilee, by the whole impression of His personality; still like unto a Son of Man; but now so transfigured with a glory not of earth or man, that with awe and reverence he fell at His feet with no sense of true life, but rather of death and corruption—it had all died down. But he is comforted, strange to say, not by the Lord emphasizing at first His manhood, except by the touch of His right hand, but by the declaration of His Godhead. *I am the First and the Last, and the Living One.*

With the help of this vision we are assured that: (a) Without ceasing to be in the midst of the throne, our Lord is here with us in the midst of His apostolic Church on earth; (b) He is

here with us as the Son of Man—Jesus of Nazareth, Who became dead and rose again; (c) And that we may have a true idea of Him as He is, He is set before us possessed of all the attributes of the Lord Jehovah. And it is this side of His being that makes it impossible to transfer the lineaments of the figure as seen by the apostle to any portrait of a human artist. Even such a wonderful picture as the *Light of the World*, which has been a real help to so many, fails to convey the sense of the majesty of the Divine and glory of the Eternal. So St. John attempts no sketch of a portrait; but gives us the suggestion of the look and appearance, and that which is behind all—the *Divine personality*—through symbols which are not intended to come into any drawing of His form and visage, such as the eyes as a flame of fire; the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God going out of the mouth; the feet of one travelling in the greatness of His strength, which burned as in a furnace; the head as of the Ancient of days; and the Holy One with locks white as wool, as white as snow. He does not fail to mention the long garment as worn by the high

priest; and the girdle of truth holding together under a certain restraint the affections and emotions of His human heart and breast, so ready to come forth to His brethren.

This then is the likeness of the appearance of our Saviour and our Judge, and without looking on it we cannot truly represent to our minds the real Christ with Whom we may come into personal fellowship in the Church, which is His temple and our home of rest, and where we may worship at His feet.

And now what is He here for? His words to the seven Churches make it clear that He is here to be our Judge. This He cannot help being in the nature of things, if He sees us through and through, if He knows our works and if He be the faithful and true witness.

But then—this judgment, though it begins at the house of God, is not for condemnation, unless we refuse to repent—but to correct, amend, discipline and form our character. He seems to deal hardly with those whom He loves, and does not spare their faults. It is no weak and sentimental Christ with Whom we have to do, such as is too often presented in our day for

our admiration rather than our adoration, and as even some hymns and devotions make Him out to be. Before all things He is righteous and true; and just for that reason also He does not pass over what there is to praise—good works on which He loves to dwell; good points of character such as patience, zeal, endurance; or strength made perfect in weakness, as in one case where there is but “little power,” but faithful loyalty to sacred trust. As we come to Him, therefore, it is to One Who is greater than our hearts and knoweth all things, and for all that He knows will not put us away from Him or shrink back from us and our corruption. On the contrary, when we would fain say, “Depart, Lord, I am so sinful!” He does in effect reply, “Fear not: I the Lord change not: I died that thou mightest live: and My gift for thee, if thou wilt commit thyself to Me, is *eternal life*.”

But the vision of Him as He is must lead to a judgment of ourselves as it will do in the hour of death and in the day of judgment.

And as He is here now with us for the very purpose of rebuking what is amiss, correcting what is wrong, supplying what is wanting, and

welcoming us into an intimacy of personal fellowship with Himself in the house of God, will you not seek His face, though the veil is not yet taken away from your bodily eye, and accept even the discipline of His rebukes as well as His word of gentleness, that you may even now in very deed feel His pierced hand laid upon your head and the passing into your being of the power of His resurrection? The one fatal thing is to keep away from Him; all the more because He is so nigh at hand.

And if, as indeed you ought, you desire blessing not only for yourself, but for the Church, which is much more Christ's than yours and more dear to Him than to yourself, you dare not be cold and indifferent, or be content with a love which was yours once, but is chilled down now into only a memory of an experience, lest your numbness and selfishness spread through other members of the society, and the candlestick be removed and your Church rejected.

In spite of your little power there is still the open door; and the word of His patience to keep through the hour of trial that is coming; and His grace which is more than sufficient;

and then at the last (it is but a little while and He will come) the steadfastness of the pillar in the temple of his God, and the name of his God, insuring a character which will bear all the light of His presence, and the name of the city of his God; and His own new name, which He that is holy, He that is true, will write upon those who have endured as seeing Him Who is invisible and yet Who has been revealed to us by His Spirit.

THE REIGNING CHRIST

V

“ And I saw in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain.”—REV. v. 6.

WE have lost, as it seems to me, a good deal of enthusiasm and manliness in our Christianity, as well as of attractive force, by not proclaiming with sufficient emphasis the gospel of a *reigning Christ*. It is not as widely and clearly understood even amongst Churchmen as it ought to be, that we ourselves and the whole world, are directly and immediately at this present time under the rule of the living, risen *Son of Man*. This is the distinctive mark of our age and dispensation. He is not only the meek and gentle Saviour entreating of us sinners to come to Him for forgiveness and peace when weary of the world and ourselves; but in all the provinces of healthful human life, in the world of commerce and business, of political and military and eccle-

siastical interests, merchants and statesmen, soldiers and clergymen, whether they believe in Him or not, are under His immediate authority and control. No national or private concern can be secure or prosper unless He gives His assent for safety and success. He puts nations in trust with vast interests of the human race, as He has the British Empire with its banner over India and the regions of Africa for carrying out towards them His designs of mercy and truth, and if the British people fail to go forward as fellow-labourers with Him in building up the city of God, He will take away our magnificent opportunity and put it in the hands of another nation. Christ really means His servants of this generation, as well as those of the past, to go into all the world to extend His gracious rule, otherwise He must call us to account for having withheld His blessings from the multitudes whom He would make fellow-citizens with us in His kingdom.

We do not put our Lord upon the throne by believing in Him: He is there set firm by the everlasting decree, whether we will have this Man—Jesus of Nazareth—to rule over us and our fellow-subjects of America, India, Africa

and the isles of the sea or not. I know from experience that the most effective appeal that can be made to the heathen is to bid them come back to their true allegiance to their Great Chief and Prince whose rightful rule they have forsaken, so that they may know Him also as their mighty Saviour. Is there not too little of the note of royalty sounded in the gospel of peace as we proclaim it, too feeble an echo of the kingdom of God's dear Son? The first sermons of the apostles, of which we have summaries in the Book of the Acts, put in the forefront the exaltation of Christ and His authority as Lord and King to give repentance and forgiveness of sins.

It is Christ in the midst of the Throne Whom we have presented to us in symbol and picture in the same Book in which we have drawn for us by the Holy Ghost the picture of the Divine Lord as He ministers to us in the midst of His Church. Let us share with St. John the vision which he was called up to see by the voice which had also arrested his attention for the sight of the form and visage of the Son of Man as He is with us on earth. Without letting this like-

ness of Him fade from our hearts, we observe as we gaze through the open door on the Throne and lift up our eyes to Him that sitteth thereon, that there is no description of form and countenance—only the suggestion of the look of the pure bright jasper and fiery red of the sardius, with the restful emblem of the emerald rainbow round about the awful splendour of holiness. Apparently we are intended to think of His throne as the centre of the ineffable glory of the ever-blessed Trinity as it comes nearest to the creation in revelation of itself. From first to last let us remember, so that there may be no need again to remind ourselves of so obvious a truth, that though the *Lamb* is in the midst of this throne, there is no substitution of the Son for the Father in government or worship, though directly apart from the Son the Father judgeth no man nor except through the Mediator receives the homage of the universe. On the other hand, since the Ascension, as well as before the birth in our flesh, the glory by which the presence and majesty of the Godhead is declared is the glory of the Second Person. St. John himself tells us that in the somewhat similar vision of Jehovah

as the Lord of Hosts in Isaiah, it was the glory of the Christ which the prophet beheld.

So it is that when we look again into the Throne as it is unveiled for us in the fifth chapter, as the mystery of God's purpose is to be revealed and the destinies of the future unrolled, the central place is occupied by the Son, now manifested in His human nature, glorified by the sacrifice which He has offered in it, the memorial of which is ever present in His manhood once slain and now alive for evermore. It is to Him in this position, which as Man He owes to the cross on which the throne is founded, that the anthem of praise is addressed to Him by the representatives of the Church and the myriads of angels, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive" all that is best—followed up by the strains of worship from all creation—"Blessing and honour and glory and power be unto Him that sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever." The Lamb is the direct object of the worship of the company of heaven, and in the Church, and throughout the universe. No created being is seen to share in the smallest measure the worship which is due only to God—no, nor any modified

expression of it; it is ever offered according to that law—Worship God and Him only.

But it is given without any stint or any limitation to the Lamb: to Him who not so very long ago (as years of the earth's history are counted) was with us as a little child, then as a boy, afterwards as a prophet, and at last lifted up between earth and heaven to be ultimately crowned for His obedience as the rightful heir to the throne, on which He is to be worshipped, and whence He is to rule as the Only Begotten of the Father and as the Firstborn from the dead.

And not only is He worshipped and adored, as the Lamb, by heaven's highest and greatest amongst the sons of God, but angels and authorities and powers are put under Him to do His will. He breaks the seals of the hidden purposes and plans of the Almighty, which are to be unfolded in the history of nations and peoples, in the destinies of man and of the Church of which He holds the key.

Just as before His birth at Bethlehem all events led up to the fulness of the time, so that at the right moment—never to occur again—He might be born of woman in that one corner of the earth

prepared for Him, so now under His guidance and control all is being brought to a head for the coming day of His manifestation as King and Bridegroom of the Church. It is not only the missions of His Church, but though they may be all unconscious about it, the kings and judges of the earth, the empires of east and west, the movements stirring blindly in the souls of nations, the schemes of legislators and statesmen, which are all working up for the kingdom of this world to become the kingdom of the Lord's Anointed — no action or tendency is allowed for a moment to get out of hand.

It is true enough that if we looked only on the Throne, the majesty and power of our King seated on God's Holy Hill, the ready obedience of the legions of angels round about, the forces set in motion by the living creatures which look every way, all at the disposal of Jesus of Nazareth, the King of kings, we should feel sure that the blessed purposes of God could not fail to be accomplished anywhere in the universe even in a moment of time if He willed, especially in such a province of His dominion as this earth, which is dear to Him as His birthplace, where He shed

His precious blood of redemption, and where He bought His Church to be His own in the closest possible ties of love and fellowship. Here, if anywhere, we would say, He would be bound to have it all His own way.

But turn your eyes from the throne to the earth as you see and know it yourselves—what do you find here? The Lord making His way very slowly. And the Church, of which the Bible says such great things—a disappointment; and everything that is opposed to Christ and His kingdom so strong; and so much that is specious, plausible and attractive brought to dethrone Him.

Then, behind these scenes visible to us, Satan, so confident of some triumph—his angels of darkness everywhere—the world, which is his instrument, drawing away into indifference or contempt so many souls that ought to glory in Christ's truth and beauty. False prophets who claim to interpret the spirit of the age in a sense hostile to the authority of Christ as Legislator and Judge and the Light of the human race. How can these things be with a Throne such as we are bidden to see by faith in the background?

Not a few amongst our philosophers and men not wholly of ill-will who draw their faith only from what is seen and felt around us, fall back on the impatient conclusion that either our God is not "quite Almighty," or that, if He is so, He cannot be kind and benevolent. "If He is both Almighty and kind, He could not allow evil to prevail as it does." But there are three reasons which may help to account for the fact that, in spite of Christ being on the throne, evil is so strong on earth for a little while.

1. In the first place, in His inscrutable wisdom and love, God has created wills which can and do oppose, and even thwart (so far as we can see), the holy and supreme will of their Creator. God the Omnipotent stands comparatively helpless before the unyielding wills of men. He has to use effort and counsel in order to subdue or win them. The time for putting down every proud and high thought that exalts itself against God is not yet come. The Everlasting is very patient—and the forbearance of God is waiting still.

2. Then the true conception of the present order of things in the Church and in the world

depends upon our apprehension of the revealed fact that not under the *immediate* rule of the Supreme Father, but under the vice-rule of the Son of Man, the world has now to work out its appointed task. Herein lies, probably, the profound cause of much that perplexes us in the apparent limitation of God's power. The resistance which Christ encountered in His ministry He is willing still to bear out of love for man, that His conquest over men may be in the end more complete. He restrains somewhat of His omnipotence: He does not, on every occasion, when the cause of God is being hindered by the counterpowers of sin and ignorance, send forth His twelve legions of angels. We find that He still waits upon the faith of those whom He would help and bless; and as of old, He has to retire—"He could do no mighty works there because of their unbelief."

3. Then in the third place it is revealed as part of the counsel of the Most High that in the administration of His rule evil should be vanquished not by the power of His Almightyness, but by the grace of God working in and through man. "Out of the mouth of babes hast Thou

perfected strength : that Thou mightest still the enemy and avenger." God uses us for the accomplishment of His purpose. Is it any wonder then that His kingdom makes but slow progress? It is through His Church that He will reveal to the heavenly powers the wisdom of the Father. And how imperfect the Church is, through which He will overcome Satan, we have seen in the unveiling of the life as seen by Him of His sevenfold Church and each several branch of it.

The kingdom of God tarries (1) because of God's respect for man's free will even when it opposes Him : (2) Because it is *as Man* that He reigns to subdue all things to Himself : (3) And because not without His Church, not without *us*, will He gain the victory and celebrate His triumph.

All the more then because Christ is on the throne is there need for us to come personally to the help of the Lord—to the help of the Lord against the mighty. He would do us the honour of really using us in His war against the rebellious;—our human powers and faculties; and what is more, He has real need of us though He

be Lord of all. He needs our strength, our wealth and power if we have them. He cannot do all He would without our influence—our willingness to say a word for Him. But He needs most of all ourselves, and the use by us of that privilege of intercession which He has entrusted to each member of His body.

Before the heavens are opened and He goes forth as leader of the armies of righteousness, He is seen in the very centre of the throne standing as a Lamb—as our latest commentator on the Book of the Revelation reminds us, the position is that of the priest offering sacrifice, and the Lamb is both sacrifice and priest. Even now He makes it clear that all triumph in His kingdom is based upon Intercession.

So for ourselves: let us go forth knowing that He is upon the throne, to do Him service and to be true to the word of His testimony: but first of all let there be our prayer for the peace of Jerusalem and for the coming of the kingdom of God, which may be laid with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which is before the throne of God and of the Lamb.

CHRIST GLORIFIED IN HIS SAINTS

All Saints' Day

VI

“ I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.”—I THESS. iv. 13, 14.

OUR thoughts have been carried by the holy solemnity of All Saints' Day within the inner court of God's Church. We shall do well to let them dwell there, for *there* the larger part of the body of Christ is, and there, by God's grace, if we abide in Him, our own future will be spent after the few years of life here until the resurrection. There shall we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change this body of our humiliation that it may be like unto the body of His glory. And our conversation even now must be in heaven; we must live as fellow-citizens of the saints.

Our Lord's true resurrection implies our seeing Him again; a long, steadfast look at Him. This Jesus shall "so come," the angels said, in the same form and true manhood, "in like manner as ye beheld Him going into heaven."

God hath appointed a day in which He shall judge the world by that Man whom He hath chosen, whereof He hath given assurance unto all men in that He hath raised Him from the dead.

And the coming of our Lord, and the sight of His face is associated with the return and recognition of our friends who are asleep in Him. For the Resurrection of Jesus as the Head involves that of the members. The Head is not complete without the whole body. What has taken place in Him will follow in all. Christ stood in that upper chamber the Firstborn among many brethren, who, when the age was ended and the mystery of God finished, were to be made like unto Him at His coming.

Indeed, so closely connected with the resurrection of the second Adam, the Lord from Heaven, is that of the Church, that St. Paul

argues in this way to the doubting Corinthians : If the dead in Christ will not rise, then is Christ Himself not risen at all, and the whole testimony of God and the apostles is a lie. But now is Christ risen as the firstfruits.

As our blessed Lord was recognized and known as the same Jesus, the Master and Friend Who had gone in and out among the disciples, when He appeared to them after He rose from the dead ; so will those who have been known to one another in the body of this death be seen and known when they appear with the unveiled King of glory : this will be the case between those who are alive and remain, and those who have crossed the flood. St. Paul is writing on the understanding that the return of Christ to earth might take place in the lifetime of some who read these words.

Sorrow not ; as if you were never to meet your brethren in Christ again. If we believe that Jesus died and rose, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him. So you are to see them again. Of course, if there was to be no future recognition there would be no meaning in this consolation. That this should

ever have been called in question or doubted only shows how little we attend to the words and the whole spirit of God's revelation, and to St. Paul's words: "I would not have you ignorant concerning those which are asleep."

The great recognition and quiet restful union is here presented to us as taking place at our Lord's coming and our resurrection, when the number is full and death is no more to separate any one. But we are not to suppose that there is to be no meeting or recognition before; indeed, the contrary is revealed as the fact of the case.

Our blessed Lord's word upon the cross to the penitent robber who hung in dying agony by His side was: "To-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise." Jesus died at three o'clock; the penitent thief's legs were broken later—but before the Sabbath began at six, the redeemed malefactor and the sinless soul had met; if there was to be no conscious recognition the promise about that same day "with Me" would have been idle.

Lazarus was carried to Abraham's bosom, the saints of the Old Testament were gathered to

their fathers. David said in hope about his child : "I shall go to him, but he will not return to me." And we are told that even now, though before our eyes there is a veil, we are come to the spirits of just men made perfect.

We may look forward to a meeting with the faithful at death ; though the recognition of them in those bodies in which they were known and served God and worshipped God, and which they kept as temples of the Holy Ghost upon earth ; the same, but changed and glorified, will not be until their resurrection.

But we must be careful not to imagine a sleep of unconsciousness, for there is no cessation even for a moment of personal conscious life at death. God is not the God of the dead but of the living. The sleep of which St. Paul speaks is not to be understood of their souls, but of their bodies. They are asleep as to their bodies, which are safe in the Lord's keeping, Who will not suffer a particle of matter necessary to their full completeness—"not a hair of their head"—to perish. But as to their spirits and souls, they are living an intenser life than when weighed down upon earth. My flesh shall rest in hope

was spoken of our Lord's adorable body, not of His soul, in which He went to do His mighty work in the realms of the hosts of the departed, still a Conqueror, mighty in battle. Free among the dead. We are told that many *bodies* of the saints which *slept* arose. St. Stephen fell asleep as to his body, but he commended his spirit to the Lord Jesus; and so throughout it is of the *body* that sleep is spoken. The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob is ever the God of the living.

And the book of the Revelation of Jesus Christ, which so fully reveals to us the state of the blessed dead, shows to us a life more intense and unwearied than during their labours upon earth.

The four-and-twenty elders are representatives of the whole Church. The vision of the great multitude sealed and giving thanks for their salvation are some of them coming out of the great tribulation before the seventh seal is opened, and when there is great distress and fear upon the earth.

The heavenly choir in the fourteenth chapter, and the victors over the world and its prince in

the fifteenth, are visions of heaven *before* the resurrection, and before the completion of the great mystery of God and the return of the Lord to reign upon earth.

From this book we see that the life of God's saints behind the veil is one of preparation for the glories and offices of the everlasting kingdom. It is a training for that : first by contemplation and worship of the King in His beauty, whether (a) in His Godhead as the all-holy, mighty, eternal; and (b) in the glory of His creation, or (c) in His worthiness to be the Unfolder of the providence as it marches onward upon earth, where the eternal counsels are being fulfilled in which they have had a part. "Thou art worthy to take the book . . . for Thou wast slain and hast redeemed us to God . . . and we shall reign on the earth."

This contemplation of God in His attributes, and in the glory of His works and redeeming wisdom and love, is accompanied with homage and reverent worship in which angels and the powers of the universe unite as well as the Church on earth.

Then it is also a life of prayer in union with

us upon earth. The elders present their censers with incense, which are the prayers of saints.

And thirdly, it is a life of glad thanksgiving, for they form a heavenly choir understanding the deep mystery of union with Christ, and the Image of God new created shining out, written on their foreheads, and they have the musical instruments and harmonies—the voice of harpers harping with their harps, and they sing the new song. Not only contemplation, but songs of praise and melody are there.

Sleep in some sense does describe their state, for the seal of God separates them from the fearful horror of wickedness and terror that overwhelms the earth when it is drawing towards the end. But as they came to their brethren out of the great tribulation, having washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, they did not pass into slumber of their faculties : they have palms in their hands, as victors after a struggle, and render back the glory of their salvation to Him that sitteth upon the throne and unto the Lamb.

They have, moreover, thoughts and interests about this earth and its history as it is developed,

as well as about their heavenly King and His gifts to themselves. As they watch the course of things upon earth, very often so full of clouds and thick darkness to us, but revealing to clearer wider view the wisdom and love of God, they have all the deep interest of the study of the history of the Church—thus it runs into thanksgiving: “Great and marvellous are Thy works, Lord God Almighty—just and true are Thy ways, Thou King of saints.”

Their attitude and feelings of interest in the plan of history is shown by the cry at the end, when there were great voices in Heaven saying: “The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ.” Our life is described in the Epistle to the Hebrews as passed in a theatre under the eyes of a great cloud of witnesses. But while theirs is a life of deep happiness and interest, it is also one of looking forward and waiting for greater things.

They cry, “How long, O Lord, how long?” Their song of adoration of the Lamb of God looks forward to the redemption of their bodies and of the travailing earth—Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed . . . and made us kings

and priests . . . and we shall reign upon the earth.

For without their bodies, which are asleep, their redemption is not complete. All this state is a time of happy discipline and progress in preparation. When the marriage of the Lamb is come it will be said: "His wife hath made herself ready;" there is now going on a heavenly process by which the Bride is prepared—offices of love among the saints in light, exercises of wisdom and revelation, and acts of obedience—the opening out of the beautiful order and heavenly arrangements of the city of God—drinking more deeply of the spirit and true humanity of the Incarnate God. It is said that the Lamb shall feed them and lead them unto living fountains of waters. And so shall the whole Church be made ready for her far more eternal and exceeding weight of glory in the ineffable union with the Lord.

Contemplation—worship—glad thanksgiving in joyful harmony of fellowship with one another—interest in God's unfolding of His providence—waiting in blessed hope of resurrection and guidance by the shepherd-care of the

risen Saviour—this is rest indeed, compared with their future activity in the city of the living God, where all shall be as the risen Head; but it is also a blessed intense human life of preparation for the day when the saying shall be fully brought to pass. “Death is swallowed up in victory.” “Thy dead shall live; My dead bodies shall arise,” saith the Lord. “Awake and sing, ye that dwell in the dust; for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast forth the dead.”

My brethren, you see that it is the return of our Lord to this earth that is thus presented to the faithful in His Church as the great consolation to those who are tried by the separations upon earth; and with that return is blended the hope of the meeting and recognition of all those fallen asleep in Him. He will return with that part of the Church who are freed from the curse of sin, but who, even now, are not, in any real sense, broken off from fellowship with us. We should enter more into the true Christianity of “waiting without terror for the Lord from Heaven,” if we dwelt more on this feature of the blessed ones coming with Him, whom He is

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now preparing for that day. To the careless and the forgetful part of the world that day is a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of fearful looking for judgment. And this is the true reason of the world's dislike to any renewed activity within the Church. When the Bride adorns herself, as it were, to look for the Saviour, and love His appearing, a kind of instinct makes the world feel the real truth that the Church is a witness to the Resurrection and the Second Coming. In her holy Eucharists the Church doth show forth the Lord's death till He come. And so the world becomes uncomfortable in its independence of Christ. The root of the mischief is that people will not really and practically believe that Jesus died and rose again—rose to be our King and Priest. And so they refuse to kiss the Son, though He reigns even now upon the holy hill of Zion, and will hereafter be manifested.

Let us examine and prove our own selves whether we are living in this faith of the Resurrection. Do we believe and try to live in the faith of it as truly as if our Lord were reigning in Jerusalem? The heavenly Jerusalem—that

is, the city of the saints which will surely one day be seen coming down out of heaven, and where His saints shall reign upon the renewed earth; where, too, the Lord Himself shall dwell with them. And so we must try and realize His reign over us as surely as if we were thus visibly, as we are really, under His government. Truly the barrier between that part of the City of God and ourselves is very easily passed. The slightest accident may be the key to open the gate into the inner court, where we are to meet those who were once with us on this side of the veil amongst the scenes of our earthly life.

These thoughts are, indeed, most practical for us, and it is but reasonable to try to know and learn what we can of the habits and spirit of a place where we might be called at any moment.

And to think of the future recognition of those with whom we are daily living should surely tell, by God's grace, upon our conversation and our fellowship, so that we may neglect no opportunity of helping forward in their Christian life those with whom our lot is cast in this world. Friends who have walked with friends will meet, brothers who have lived with

brothers, masters and servants, congregations who have joined in the same services, and have helped one another by reverence and attention, and strengthened the belief and the holy fear of their brethren in the Lord's presence, mothers who have prayed for and watched over their children, and faithful stewards of God's mysteries who have declared unto their flock the whole counsel of God. My brethren, you see the significance of that future recognition upon our present life. Bring it home to yourselves, and may God grant us so to live here that it may be indeed a joyful recognition hereafter.

THE TABERNACLE OF GOD WITH
MEN

Christmas

VII

“ I heard a great voice from the throne saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men.”—REV. xxi. 3.

THE Christian Faith teaches us that the Monarch of the universe, the Lord God Omnipotent, the Son of the Most High, has come to dwell with us in our human nature, which nature is now also His own for ever. This is the great fact for which the Christmas festival is meant to arrest attention. Behold ! the mystery and the wonder of the love of God. Behold ! and see, all ye that pass by, this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known to us. This is the appeal, which the Church makes even to dull hearts and ears, by festal service and carols, by hymn and Eucharist, by chimes and decorations. The sympathy of an unwonted stir and movement is around us; the home is again a centre; parents have been expectant; children have been gathering round them; friends are

remembered even though absent. Art and thought have been enlisted for months to bear good wishes to and fro; greetings are exchanged with voice and hand; the post and the railway have been prepared to do away with distance; and buying and selling, after a keener activity, are bidden to pause that all may make holiday. And though some hearts are sad and anxious, and for all too many Christmas brings no cheer, yet there is a feeling as if angels were about and as if it would be no great surprise for men to hear again the message and the song of the heavenly host. All this stirring of the soul within and the world without may be taken as an echo upon earth of the great voice out of the throne: "Behold!" For as an historical fact the mystery which it proclaimed is the cause for all this quickening of the pulse of human life when the birthday of the Christ comes round.

Only it almost seems, more and more as the years go by, as if those accidental accompaniments of this festival time would stop short with themselves, and engage the whole attention whilst so little proportionate heed and care is given to the one central reality which is the

foundation of our Christmas joy. Not the holiday, nor the gifts, nor the eager looking forward excitement, nor the reunion in the dear home, is the heart and soul of Christmastide, but the mighty blessed truth and fact: "The tabernacle of God is with men."

In this special form, the utterance is a word from heaven for an occasion *not yet* fully come; it is the herald note of welcome for the mystery of God when fully developed and complete. It is a call to celebrate the coming down of the glorified Church, with her Lord and Head, in unveiled glory; for abiding fellowship of eternal life and sovereignty in service upon the earth redeemed from vanity, for free expression of its capacity and beauty. It seems as if at the last there will be revealed upon this earth in visible reality of body, as well as spirit, the same wonder of EMMANUEL which we commemorate as having already come to pass. Only *then* the face of God in Christ will be seen without any outer veil of weakness and humiliation, and the Church will have been made, throughout its whole body, an habitation of God through the Spirit. The true wonder both then, when we

shall see Him as the King in His beauty, as well as when He first dwelt amongst us in our flesh, is that God has been pleased to dwell with men so as to be seen and known with intimacy of converse and possibility of being even touched and handled. That is the standing wonder of heaven and earth, incredible if it were not true. For Him, being what He is, to be more or less invested with majesty and honour woven out of His own creation, would be quite a secondary matter. The marvel is that there should be in reality any Tabernacle of God, and that in it He should dwell with men—with men who had so spoilt and marred the very nature in which He meant to tabernacle. But this is what has come to pass; and it is more than an earnest and pledge of the wonder which shall be hereafter to which the great voice calls our attention, and which is already essentially a fact for us all to-day.

A fact it is ever since the great event which makes the pivot of all history when the Word was made flesh. But that was not an event meant to startle and amaze the world without preparation. More than two thousand years

before, the Lord had said to His servant Moses, "Let them make Me a sanctuary that I may dwell among them." Though but a tent pitched in the wilderness, the tabernacle was the house of God on earth, and in the building of it God was His own Architect. "Thou shalt make it," Moses was charged, "according to the pattern in the mount." Previously, indeed, in the patriarchal dispensation the Lord had bowed the heavens to speak with men in the likeness of the appearance of a man or an angel. He had appeared to Abraham at the tent door, to Isaac at Beersheba, to Jacob at Bethel. But His comings for a long time, as in the shadow of Egyptian life, had ceased.

When Israel was brought before Mount Sinai, the wilful and rebellious people were kept at a distance and made to feel far off from God, whilst Moses drew near alone: "And the glory of the Lord abode upon Mount Sinai, and a cloud covered the Mount, and Israel was afraid to draw nigh."

The history of its institution makes it clear that the Tabernacle, although but a shadow of coming realities, was an ordinance of grace and

mercy. It was provided as a home for the glory of the Lord which lightened the sanctuary, veiling it and yet assuring those who dwelt about of its nearness; it was the meeting-point of mercy and truth, of righteousness and peace, through the memorial of the law of holiness and the sacrifices of propitiation—the appointed place of meeting for God and man.

Here, and not merely in visits at a tent door, the word and wisdom of God would vouchsafe to tarry so as to be always in fellowship with His chosen ones, and very nigh at hand, yea, in their very midst, instead of with barrier fixed as at the mount of the law lest the people should break through and perish.

But apart from all other comings short of the more excellent glory and more abounding grace of the true tabernacle, there was this supreme contrast—the tabernacle of Israel was never in any sense one with the glorious Inmate, as now the human form and nature is for ever inseparably one with the Godhead which dwells within. Now He has come near so that He may abide with us for ever—not making His attendant angels “flames of fire” as at the giving of the

law, or with summons of the piercing sound of a trumpet loud and long, but bidding them sing the songs which simple shepherds might love to hear and children repeat for joy, that in such grace and gentleness, though none the less the Holy One of Israel, the King of Glory has come down to be Emmanuel, God with us—and to remain Emmanuel.

In the days of His flesh He was seen and handled upon earth, yet for the most part they knew Him not. We know Him Who He is though as yet we see Him not. But when the voice has sounded from the throne He will be with men, both seen and known by His own, and they shall be His people. Knowing Him to be what He is and seeing Him as He is in the unveiled brightness of His glory, we shall yet with open face behold the beauty of the Lord our God without being blinded by the exceeding splendour of the light, for His servants shall serve Him seeing His face.

It is for such nearness to the presence and person of the great King, upon Whom the Virgin Mother and Joseph and the shepherds, as well as the angels of God, were in such close attend-

ance, that we are being prepared in our Bethlehem of the Church by prayer and Eucharist and offering and service of love. It is through the ministries in His Church now that the Lamb, who is in the midst of the throne (to use St. John's expression) spreads His tabernacle over us, with its cords lengthened and its folds extended—until the whole company of the faithful shall become the habitation of God through the Spirit and is ready for the disclosure of the final purpose of the redeemed creation.

The tabernacle of God is even now with men. Are we sufficiently alive to this, the greatest fact of our present life, the crowning result—before the last final issue of what God has wrought, of the Incarnation, death, ascension and gift of the Spirit of life?

Forgetfulness or unbelief as to our present relation to the living Christ (Who, instead of parting with the humanity in which He was born to-day, has united us through it and by His Spirit with Himself) is a reason for much of our indifference towards our festivals and Sundays and acts of worship. That which has to do with the past and less living present ceases to be

interesting. And so, many of us are more occupied with our presents and our excitements, our Christmas parties, our pleasures, our disappointments and our grievances, our pains and sorrows too, than with the one great proclamation at which the whole universe might stand still amazed, "The tabernacle of God is with men!"

In some quarters we have attenuated almost to a fine art the aloofness and outsideness of our thought and interest in the question of our personal relation to our still Incarnate Lord as the living point of contact for God and man and heaven and earth, as if we needed no such meeting-place.

Are we waiting for Mount Sinai with its lightnings and thunderings, for the trump of God, to stir us from our apathy? Nay, brethren, let the message of the angel and the glory of the Lord shining round suffice for us. And let us place ourselves under the shelter of that tabernacle, which is spread over us from the throne of the Son of Man. And not ourselves alone and our worship, but all our life—our home, our children, our holiday plans, and our hopes and

fears for the new year. Nothing need be excluded but what is of sin; for He loves us, He wills to have us and all that is ours with Him; to let us be in our daily life *in Him* as our shelter, our home, our shrine of holiness, our tabernacle of rest. "Behold! the tabernacle of God is with men and He will dwell with them—Emmanuel—God with us."

THE NAME OF JESUS

New Year's Day, 1905

VIII

“ Being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the *Name of Jesus* every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”—PHIL. ii. 8, 9, 10.

To many of us it is probable our own Christian names have been given for a reason. But amongst the Hebrews of old time the name was even more significant than it is with us; in some cases being given from heaven beforehand. It was often a prophecy or suggestion of character to be developed, conveying a message of inspiration or of a divinely ordered purpose or an interpretation of the life to be lived or memory to be cherished. It was ordinarily given by parents, as in the case of St. John Baptist, and of our Lord Himself on the occa-

sion of the circumcision of the child, probably as a memorial of the change of their forefather's name from Abram to Abraham, when he and his household entered through circumcision into God's covenant of blessing.

In the name *Jesus* given to the Holy Child there was a special application to His destiny and mission, of the great national hope, which was indeed contained in this name, Jehovah shall save—with a salvation, mighty (as men would learn) not by irresistible force, but wrought out in the midst of the earth through obedience unto death. The Holy Child in submitting to the covenant-rite accepted the position of those whom He came to save, in their standing to the law of God, which was one of condemnation for sin, with full recognition of the duty of loving obedience. Through sacrifice and obedience He would alter this relation of being condemned by the law, "redeeming them that were under the law that we might receive the adoption of sons." How He magnified this law and made it honourable, sharing not only our humanity but our inferiority in the form of a slave, though He be Lord of all—we need not pause to consider.

What we are expressly told in the passage I have read is, that for being so true to His name Jesus, in winning salvation through such obedience, God gave to Him as the *Son of Man* the Name which belonged to Him by right as the Son of God, the name of the Lord Jehovah which was hidden in the name Jesus—Jehovah is salvation. It was a name which had been borne amongst others by Joshua, the great leader of Israel's hosts into the land of promise. But no other than the Lord and Saviour could express and realize in life and work the fulness of its meaning. He has been *all* that "Jesus" could signify or suggest. Therefore, now, at the *Name of Jesus*, which was given to Him as the Son of Man, and which He was not ashamed to own in His heaven of glory, whence He spoke to Saul, as *Jesus of Nazareth* every knee will have to bow, all confessing that His human obedience was the offering of One who was truly *the Lord*. This, indeed, He had never ceased to be; but it might have been questioned whether because He was found in fashion as a man, worship would be still wholly due to Him in His nature and form as *Man*. The right to receive worship belonged

to Him essentially as the Son of God, but it was also given to Him as worthy to receive it, through His humanity, because of His faithfulness to all that was required of Him in the eternal counsel of God, as *Jesus Christ* and *Head of our sinful race*. And it is to Him still in this human form, "The Lamb as it had been slain," that praise and adoration are rendered, as St. John was assured, and as St. Paul had declared it must be, by "every created thing which is in the heaven, and in the earth, and under the earth, and in the sea, and all things that are in them."

This worship and adoration of Jesus, once crucified and now exalted, not only does not take away from the honour due to the Father, but on the contrary magnifies it, for it is a tribute and homage paid to all the Persons of the Godhead when Jesus Christ is owned and served as Lord. And especially it is to the glory of *God the Father*.

Of such great glory and dignity then is the name given us on this day and written over the threshold of our new year. It is in its strength that we go forth to the unknown events and experiences of the coming days. We shall need

all the confidence which it gives under the burden of the mystery of life, and in facing the riddle of the history of the world. Let the motto "*Jesus Christ is Lord*" be inscribed on the banner that we bear onward a stage higher up the hill of God to the city of light. So only, dare we meet the problems and questionings which confront us as the roll of the future is unfolded in the providence of God.

We shall find that this name of the Lord will give us a trustful assurance first of the *Character* of God, secondly of the *Purpose* of God, and thirdly *in the answer of our own hearts* to the personal claims of God.

First. The criticisms and doubts of the time are all compelling us to face the question of the character of the God of the Bible and of the Church. And our conception of the character of the God, with Whom we have to do and Whom we worship, really determines our own character and conduct.

From the *name* of Jesus, which is the revelation of *Himself* and of the Father, we learn to know the Person with whom we have to do all through this year, day by day and week by week. From

His name we are sure that God is both gracious and righteous—gracious first of all, indeed, but also righteous—and not only righteous in all His judgments (as in those which are abroad in the world now), but *always* gracious and merciful.

Believing in His name, the name inscribed upon His cross, we will hold fast to our faith that *God is Love* no matter what happens. If visitations of appalling judgments crush the innocent with the guilty, we shall still be sure that He cares. If waves and storms roll over the soul of some righteous man, we know that Jesus Christ is the same to-day as yesterday and for ever.

And next: If Jesus is Lord and the government is upon His shoulder, then we know that the purpose of God will be carried out this year in the salvation of man (not only salvation from death and ruin, but from sin, which may require judgment for sins). All rule and authority over the world throughout this year will be in the hand of the Son of Man. All forces of whatever kind in the visible or invisible world will be under His control. We may rely upon Him

to be true to His name of Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Father of the age to come. Yes, and though wars may continue and rumours of wars abound, He will still reign as the *Prince of Peace*: offering peace upon peace to him that is near and to him that is far off.

(a) He quite knows how His Church in this land is disquieted in her heart lest the trust which He assigned to her of feeding His lambs and teaching the children to observe all things whatsoever He has commanded should be made, largely through her own fault, more difficult to discharge.

(b) He is well aware that serious perplexities as to the stewardship of wealth, and right relations on the part of employers towards the multitudes of those who toil and labour (many of them precariously) cannot be shirked, but may be regarded from His point of view, neither selfishly nor with partisan sentiment. He is not indifferent to the grave peril of the people of England, whom He has blessed so exceedingly above all the nations on the earth, and to whom He has given such wonderful opportunities of worshipping God in spirit and in truth, ceasing in large

measure to be a worshipping people, and so gradually losing the vision of God and His truth.

And because He is Lord of the Ages we know that the *delays of God*, the cause of impatience to so many, even of the faithful, are explained by His *patience and gentleness* who willet not that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. Yet we dare not idly say that because He is on the throne, all will be well at once, unless His people also are ready in the day of His power. For before He can visibly reign in righteousness, things in heaven and things in earth, and things under the earth must be made to bow before Him: not so much by the force and might which He can put forth, as by His love working through His own people.

It has been well said by Dr. Andrew Murray, "There is no more spiritual and mysterious truth than that Christ our Head is actually and entirely dependent upon the members of His body for carrying out the plans which He as Head has formed." And there are tracts of life in which He can still do no mighty work because of our unbelief. Yet the purpose of God which has

assigned supremacy to man in Christ will be carried out, a step nearer to the goal, by all that will happen in the coming year. He knows whether that tremendous war, which has slain its thousands and tens of thousands, will be made to cease, or whether it will kindle a fire which will burn beyond its present limits to the ruin of other countries and desolation of homes, in which men of other nations would fain continue to dwell in quietness and peace.

We know that He is called Faithful and True, and true He will remain, through this and every age, to His name of Saviour and to the righteousness in which He doth judge and make war. The rulers of the earth may take their counsel and the people imagine vain things, but He hath on His vesture and on His thigh a name written with lustre that never fades, *King of kings and Lord of lords*.

But what will it avail for us, though He be Lord of all, if in our own wills and our own hearts we have prepared no throne for Him? There are very few here who will not make a resolution to be this year, with God's help, in some respects at least better men and better

women. But not a few, when they make their resolution, do so despairing of the struggle which is involved, and all too fearful lest, like other resolves which they have made before, this also should be vain. They will promise themselves to be more reverent, religious, serious, temperate, chaste, readers of their Bible, regular worshippers on Sunday, more just, honest, diligent and true, kinder and more unselfish and good-tempered. Some will begin well and go on for a while, then be overcome by their fault, lose heart, and fall back upon their old ways. What is really needed, over and above a resolution to overcome some special sin or follow after some grace and virtue more faithfully, is a *great ruling principle of life* which will determine the plan and tenor of it *as a whole*. Such a principle I commend to you to be found in this name which is above every name.

Jesus Christ is Lord, and this Lord shall be my Lord.

Therefore "to please the Lord," as Archbishop Temple used to put it constantly to others, clearly making it the law of life for himself, "to please the Lord" may be the constraining motive

of all actions, the test of all plans, the soul of all endeavours. First to be loyal to Him, and then out of loyalty and love to serve Him Who is so worthy, will make life for God and right so much easier to live. If we are true in the desire to please our Lord with steadfast purpose of heart and will, and in the general ordering of our life, and yet *fail* from time to time, let us have patience and humility to *begin again*, especially on such a day as this. For the Name stands steadfast as a pledge for forgiveness and renewal of power. Hope with the psalmist and say, "He will restore my soul; He will lead me in the paths of righteousness *because of His name.*"

Take St. John's word to beginners in the life of fellowship with God—"Your sins are forgiven you for *His name's sake.*" And should you ever have to plead for yourselves and others who you fear deserve to be cast away for profaning the holy name, plead His faithfulness to His own character who once explained His dealings of mercy and pity to Israel—"Ye shall know that I am the Lord when I have wrought with you for *My name's sake*, not according to

your evil ways nor according to your corrupt doings."

Only remember that reliance upon the name of the Saviour, in whom mercy and truth have met together, as the great power in heaven and earth, must carry with it a faith which commits the whole man to a trustful surrender to His kingly claims. And believe that the New Year's wish of *your Lord* for you this day, to which He can certainly give effect, must surely be that when the years of earth have run their course and the salvation of God is gloriously complete—in the redemption from sin and death, of body, soul and spirit—*His name, through faith in His name*, may be found to have given you this same perfect soundness in the presence of Him that sitteth upon the throne and of His whole creation.

OUR LORD'S APPEARING OR
MANIFESTATION

Epiphanytide

IX

“ Beloved, now are we the sons of God ; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be ; but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him ; for we shall see him as he is.”—I JOHN iii. 2.

THE Collect, Epistle and Gospel of this Sunday (sixth after the Epiphany), seldom occurring as they do to-day in our Christian year, unite with one voice in directing our thoughts to the coming Epiphany or manifestation of our Lord, and its bearing upon our life in the present. The majestic Collect, which we would do well to use frequently in preparation for our Communions, is a prayer that we may so deal with the grace and power of sonship of the children of God, which has come to us through the Epiphany in the past, that we may not miss the joy of being like Him, Whom we are yet to see as He is in His kingdom of glory. To see Him as He is and to be like Him sums up the hope set before us.

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Different aspects of His appearing are suggested in the three terms applied to this great event of the future in the New Testament. (1) It is called the "*parousia*," or presence, in which He is thought of as being all at once by our side, even when we were unconscious of His nearness; His arrival when He seemed to be far away. It is frequently used by our Lord Himself and St. Paul, but only once by St. John—when He bids His children "abide in Him that if He shall be manifested we may have boldness, and not be ashamed before Him at His coming or presence."

(2) But the arrival of Christ in visible guise on the scene of earthly history is, after all, only the *unveiling* of One who is never truly "absent" from His Church and His people. And so the appearing is often spoken of as the "*apocalypse*," or unveiling, as, for instance, in the Epistle to the Thessalonians, who are promised rest "at the unveiling of our Lord Jesus from heaven with the angels of His power." The Corinthians are "waiting for the unveiling of the same Lord Jesus." Our Lord Himself spoke of the "day when the Son of Man is

unveiled or revealed." The expression refers essentially to the removal of the veils which hide the unseen Lord, and especially to the moment when they will be actually drawn aside.

(3) There is yet another word which implies that this uncovering of what is concealed brings to light and manifestation something *glorious*. The appearing will also be an Epiphany in glory of the Lord and Saviour, "which in its own times He shall show, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords." And this glory will be threefold:

(a) It will be a shining forth from within through His humanity of His own glory—the glory which He had with the Father before the world was—a glory, let us note, which He has prayed that we may ourselves behold, and which He once showed, as they were able to bear it, to the three on the holy mount of the Transfiguration.

(b) It will also be the glory of the Father, in which He will come and through which, perhaps, there will be made possible to the heart of the pure, who pray and strive to purify them-

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selves, even as He is pure, some vision of the ineffable beauty and beatitude of Him who dwelleth in the light which no man can approach unto, Whom no man hath seen or can see. Of such a glory it is not for us to speak nor to conceive, except only in worship.

(c) Then there will be, as an accompaniment of the Epiphany—and this constantly declared—the glory of the holy angels. He will come in the glory of the holy angels. Ah! perhaps this seems more within the reach of our imagination, and yet we can only feebly rise up to any conception of it by the steps up which St. Augustine mounts when he struggles to realize the idea of His glory and beauty, and of ourselves being like Him. “So then,” he says, “we are about to see a certain sight, excelling all beauties of the earth: the beauty of gold, silver, forest, fields—the beauty of sea and air, sun and moon—the beauty of stars—the beauty of angels—aye, excelling all these, because all these are beautiful only for It. What, therefore, shall we be when we shall see all these? What is promised? *We shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is*: the tongue hath spoken

as it could; *let the rest be thought over by the heart.*"

But we have not yet touched on the special feature of that glory which possibly the Lord speaks of as *His own*. May it not be the glory of His love unto death, the glorious love of His atonement for sin, to the outward and visible signs of which He pointed when, having appeared to His own and spoken peace, He showed His hands and His side, and said to them again: "Peace be unto you"? We are more than once bidden to think of His appearing as that of the same Jesus Who was once crucified: "They shall look upon Him Whom they pierced." Surely the Light of that great day of light, as of the city of God, will be the Lamb, and the Lamb as It had been slain. And for this very reason, if for no other, that sight must be for many a sight of terror—because this appearing in the character and form of the once crucified will be such clear, irresistible evidence of the great love, which has been rejected, and of the unspeakably awful nature of sin, which has been preferred—sin that meant death for Him and has for ever left its mark upon Him.

The time of this appearing is the day of the Lord—a day which may mean a thousand or thousands of years—even as with the Lord a thousand years is one day : a day for the dawning of which there are appointed signs spread over, it may be, throughout all these last times, as the apostle calls them, and gathering themselves up into a head of unmistakable intensity just at the very end. We are to be prepared all through for wars and rumours of wars, for disturbances of nature, moved to its centre and expectant for the great manifestation, for upheavals of social order, through the spirit of lawlessness finally embodied in the lawless One, for cooling down of the fire of love, for decay of faith, for the calm indifference of materialism, and eager pleasure-seeking, with life lived for earthly ends in eating and drinking, planting and building, marrying and giving in marriage; for corresponding credulity and superstition, with its cries of “Lo ! here is Christ,” or “Lo ! He is there”—*anywhere* but where He said He would be, with His apostles, all the days even unto the end of the world ; and as of old coming and present not with observation or loud adver-

tisement. Then men are to see the sign of the Son of Man, and what this is will be known when it is given—perhaps not before—and then—the *Son of Man Himself*.

Yes, we shall *see* Him, and see Him as He is. What can we say more? What need we say? See Him about Whom we have had to make our decision here—see Him coming to Whom we have been bidden to come—see Him—the light of life—yea, the very Life Eternal.

And now, what is this appearing to us now? Let us see what it was to St. Paul on the one hand and to St. John on the other. It need not be just alike for all. For St. Paul it looks as if the appearing chiefly meant the arrival in personal presence, or, as he rather thought of it, the unveiling of One who had already *appeared* and been *unveiled* to him at his conversion; so that he could say, "He was *seen* by me." It was the disclosure of his Lord and his Divine and human friend; it was the withdrawal of veils from the great fact and reality which was the centre of his life and thought, with which he was in hourly contact, of One with Whom he was in daily converse; to Whom he

referred all his plans, Who was the object of his affections and the sovereign of his ambitions, Whom he had learnt to know with reverent familiarity, and with Whom his one desire was to spend eternity. To "be ever with the Lord" would come to pass when the Lord should descend from heaven.

For St. John it was not, perhaps, so much the coming into sight of an external form, though it was that undoubtedly, the vision of the very One on Whose bosom he had leant at supper, but more the full development of a life of vision and fellowship. He had made his own the very words of St. Paul which shows we cannot separate into different compartments the ideas or hopes of the apostles: "When Christ Who is our life shall appear, or be manifested, then shall we also appear with Him in glory."

"Now are we the sons of God;" "When He shall appear we shall be like Him," for then our kindred life will leap forth to the Life manifested, from which it has all come. Even now behind our life is His Light; behind all light of life is His Life. And when the Light comes out, as the sun from behind the cloud, then the whole

life will glow with the sunlight. For both apostles it meant everything—to see the Lord, to be like Him.

There is no reason, except in ourselves, why we should not think with St. Paul and feel with St. John, with the same kind of thought and feeling, if not in like degree—no reason except in ourselves.

We must begin *at once*, if we have not done so, to live in truth the life which we are here in the Church of God for the very purpose of living—the life of *fellowship* with the risen, the exalted, the present, the coming Christ; a living Person, truly face to face with us—a Person with persons—as He will be on the day of His appearing.

And next, we must so order ourselves as to let that personality of Christ, with which I say we must be one day consciously and certainly face to face, make its own deep impression upon us now. Do we allow a fair chance of such an impression being made in this day of quick, fleeting, perhaps striking, but often shallow and rapidly succeeding impressions? Do we all give ourselves a fair chance of seeing Him as He is

with a strong, steadfast, spiritual gaze, with the eyes of our heart?

Some who have been here can hardly be said to do so in respect of one opportunity—let me say it simply and frankly, not by way of administering a rebuke from the pulpit to those who are not here now to receive it, but whom I should wish to reach with some echo of affectionate remonstrance. When a considerable part of a congregation make a practice of leaving the church after the anthem or before the sermon, and come for just half the service (who they are who have come and gone I cannot tell—as a matter of fact I do not see them; I am not here to judge them), they may think they have a good religious reason for it, but they cannot be said to let the *full impression* of what Christ would do for them take effect upon their minds. If the object of the Lord's day is pleasure of one sort or another—including a pleasant Sunday afternoon—not too much of it; just as much as suits a man's fancy; without the message that quickens the conscience or constrains serious thought, and reminds of responsibility for faith and conduct—we might speak lightly of such a

departure. It is difficult for the preacher to deprecate the habit, for it seems to put him in the position of resenting a personal slight. We know that it is *not meant* for that, or anything in the shape of a personal affront. It is just because it is *not this*, but something much more grave, that we feel bound for once to speak. It is true enough that a rush out of doors after the anthem or the first hymn does indicate a change—not for the better—in the old traditions of courtesy and reverence; it does mark a loss of a delicate perception of the fitness of things, of sensitive consideration of the possible influence upon others, a failure of those instincts and feelings which go to make up the character of the perfect gentle knight of Christian chivalry, the *noblesse oblige* of the sons of God. But it is *far more than this* (allowing, of course, for special cases and reasons). For the service is a *whole*, demanding some effort and sacrifice and restraint, and, if you like, patience. It is not an entertainment, nor merely a lecture provided by the preacher whose turn it is to be in the pulpit, but a message through the Church, in the name of God, on behalf of Christ, on the one side, and

a response, a mental and moral attitude, on the part of the body of Christ and of the individual soul to the appeal of the Spirit and the bride. And through it all the Christ Whom we are waiting to meet and see at His unveiling is with us. Here is His presence (or *parousia*), with His word read and preached, with His blessing given, with His name invoked in intercession and thanksgiving. And He is in the very midst of all these means, which are *without Him* nothing, to make an *impression of Himself*, of His light, His love, His grace, upon each soul before Him in preparation for His appearing. If a man fails to be interested it is because he does not look beyond the instrument, or the voice, or the earthly vessel to his Lord. And if the opportunity is not used there must be a distinct loss to the faithful, seeing that even the "*sincere mind*," as St. Peter calls it, has need to be stirred up by being put *in remembrance* of truths familiar and well known; of such a truth, for example, as this of which you have been reminded to-day: *we shall see Him as He is*: we shall be like Him if we are true to our sonship.

For any impression of such a message to abide

and to profit withal, there is, indeed, uttermost need of the help of the Holy Spirit, which will not be withheld from those who seek His aid. But of this *I am quite certain*: that when we see Him we shall also see that we might have learnt to know Him better here, that we might have gained a more intense desire to purify ourselves even as He is pure.

However lamely put, who is there in this congregation or in the city outside who does not need to have even his pure mind put in remembrance of the truth on which I have been dwelling.

If not before, as I pray God we may even now, at least when He shall appear, we must awake to the consciousness that the Lord has been in this place; and that this very place where we are met before Him has been no other than the house of God, none other than the gate of heaven, at which He has blessed us to-day, if we have sought His face, sending out His light and His truth, so that when we see Him as He is—waking up after His likeness, made really *like Him*—we shall be satisfied with it.

TO DEPART AND BE WITH CHRIST

Good Friday

X

“To depart and be with Christ.”—PHIL. i. 23.

THE talk of the people in Jerusalem that first Good Friday evening, so many centuries ago, would be much about the death of the Prophet whom the city had welcomed a few days before as the Messiah—“He died this afternoon, and strange things happened at His death.” And so a fear and panic had shaken their minds. But perhaps, when they came to think of it, they would say, that if He had not been a deceiver, He would have saved Himself, or been saved—and then they would feel easier about it all—and then other things such as the great feast would soon occupy their attention and interest. Even when we care deeply, it is so much a part of our human nature to have our thoughts diverted to other things. Let us picture to ourselves what may happen to any one of us now here.

Perhaps sooner than we now think the report

may be carried through the streets of the city, and to the homes of friends and acquaintances : "He died this afternoon—it is more than four hours since he died." *What has happened in those four hours—what has he seen or heard?* Let us take the case of one who has died in the Lord : who has fallen asleep in Christ—perhaps after years of faithful service, or possibly as the penitent thief—for we must leave to our Lord Himself the uplifting of the curtains upon the soul of one who has been called away, still selfishly indifferent and impenitent.

Death may have come about in how many ways : (a) physically—generally at the last without much pain, or unconscious; suddenly, or after long months or weeks of illness. (b) Mentally—depressed or joyful, not always with happy consciousness of the light from the face of God.

The body now is cold. It is robed in its mantle of peace, so still and quiet, its sufferings over; the dear ones are mourning; preparations are being made for the funeral.

But *the man himself* has entered into a world, invisible to his friends—a land of no return; but

since Christ died and rose again a land of life, not Sheol or the place of shadows.

Directly or indirectly the gate for him into the unseen has been opened by our Lord. Has He not declared : "I have the keys of death and the place of the dead" ? Yet Him, perhaps, he has not seen at once, but a company of the angels who carried Lazarus to Abraham's bosom, have met him who is no stranger to them, for they have watched his earthly course, and bear him through space of throbbing light or unknown emptiness to the feet of his Lord.

There the elect are gathered whom He has redeemed, who have looked forward as St. Paul did to be with Christ.

And then the soul is conscious of Him as the dominant figure and personality at the back of all history. If there be any far-off sight of the Throne He is in the midst of it. In Paradise He is giving to eat of the Tree of Life—He is leading some by the living fountains of waters.

Paradise may be described by many pictures of beauty and brightness—but beyond all else, and as if all else mattered little, though all that

is good must be sure to follow on it: to depart thither is to be *with Christ*.

And the redeemed soul is most conscious of its Lord and Saviour in that aspect in which He is represented as the Lamb, in His character as the Redeemer of His people by His own blood; as the Christ Who was once, as on this day, on the Cross—and is now alive. The virtues of the cross live in Him, and He is what He is because of the cross.

From this intense consciousness of Him Who is the centre of all, the disembodied spirit is conscious of himself; of the qualification which he is bound to have in order to be at all in peace in the presence of such holiness, Whose eyes are as a flame of fire. He has met the others who are coming out of the great tribulation; he sees that they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb—therefore they are before the throne.

And he must so have qualified himself already. In some way also must he be like his fellows there—he must have suffered for Christ—borne something for Him—filled up that which is behind for His body's sake, which is the Church;

he must have continued with Him in His temptation.

And they serve—it may not be much of active service until after the Resurrection—perhaps chiefly worship, and the contemplation of the beauty of holiness. How much of intense spiritual force does this service imply.

These then are the four conditions : (1) Christ as the centre. (2) The white robe. (3) *After* suffering. (4) Preparedness for service. And one more : a happy memory ; memory must not mar your peace ; the influence left behind must go on working. “I have five brethren.” Is Christ more of a living person to your brethren and companions because you have lived ?

Now these conditions for a blessed entrance into Paradise have to be accepted *here*—and partly fulfilled. That entrance, let us remember, is not only for the experience of “dying happily,” but for going on living happily and blessedly through the ages beyond. Paradise will be only the earnest and pledge of the life of the Resurrection yet to come. How far away that life stretches ! beyond what dispensations and revelations !

Yet it is a life not unfamiliar to you in principle; for it is the life that you might begin in this court of the Lord's house, in this part of the body of Christ—the Church of Christ which grew out of His pierced side. It is given you as your home here and now, for the very purpose that you may learn to be at home in those principles which you will need there, even in those first few hours after your death.

And that you might make them your own in the Church of the living God, the cross was set up as on this day; and He Who died on it is now our King, Who by that cross won the right of ruling in grace and mercy all the kingdoms both of the dead and of the living.

O God, who hast willed that we, who are appointed to death, should yet know neither the day nor the hour thereof, grant to us Thy servants, that we may walk before Thee in holiness and righteousness all our days, and finally depart in peace and die in the Lord, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

THE POWER OF CHRIST'S
RESURRECTION

Easter Day, 1907

XI¹

“That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection.”—PHIL. iii. 10.

SUCH was the utterance of St. Paul's heart's desire, even when he had already attained to a knowledge of Christ, greater perhaps than that of any living man, with the exception of St. John.

It was still his prayer when he had learnt to know the risen Christ, oh ! so much better than we do who so often are content with the measure of our poor knowledge. Yet he had come to know his Lord without any such interviews with Him as the apostles had had in the days of His flesh. He had not heard His gracious words, nor been with St. Peter on the holy mount, nor seen His works of mercy, nor been in the upper chamber at the institution of the Holy Eucharist, or when our Lord stood in the midst as on the evening

¹ The last sermon preached by Bishop Webb, Easter Day 1907, in Salisbury Cathedral.

of this day, nor was he even gathered together with them on the day of Pentecost.

The gospel he preached had been taught him by his Master chiefly from heaven, and his knowledge of Him had come through communion with Christ risen and through the revelation he had received from Him.

Before his conversion he had heard much of the Man Jesus; perhaps he had seen Him, as many a Jew had done, without beholding any beauty or majesty in Him. But now it was on the risen Lord that the eyes of his heart were fixed ever since he had seen Him, not less really than James and Cephas had done, with his own bodily eyes, soon blinded by the vision of the exceeding glory.

In one sense we are ourselves in St. Paul's position rather than in that of the apostles. It is the Christ in glory with Whom we have to do—the risen Lord Whom we must know if we would have eternal life. It is true that we cannot hope to know Him and what He is without following Him through the gospels as He moves on from Bethlehem to Nazareth, and then to His ministry in Galilee and Jerusalem, and upwards

beyond the cross to the mount of the ascension. And St. Paul certainly did not ignore the manifestation on earth of the Son of Man, of which the gospels are the record; for the title which rang in his ears was that of "Jesus of Nazareth." "Who art Thou, Lord?" "I am Jesus of Nazareth." Jesus is what He is because of Nazareth and Galilee, and Jerusalem and Golgotha. We cannot know Him without beholding Him as He is unveiled in the words He spake and the works He wrought. Yet no "life of Christ" by itself, good as it may be, which stops short of His life in heaven can enable us to know Him with the knowledge for which St. Paul prayed.

Our motto must be up to Christ as well as back to Christ.

And what was there for St. Paul to know about the Christ who appeared to him? We find the rudiments of this knowledge all contained in the great manifestation at his conversion.

(1) First, that he felt that Christ was absolutely his Lord—whether he should live or whether he should die, here or in the world to come. One who could so control the world that He could, if He would, send him to Rome and

far hence unto the Gentiles, could mete out the plan of his sufferings and stand by His servant to strengthen him as he bore his faithful witness. St. Paul would go nowhere where Christ was not the ruler.

(2) He came to know Him by learning our Lord's own perfect knowledge of himself. He had called him by his name, as He had Mary. He knew of his going out and coming in. He had an intimate knowledge in heaven of where His servants dwelt on earth—as of Ananias, whom He sent to Saul, in the street called Straight—and even as He had known before His Ascension of the test demanded by St. Thomas who had not been with the apostles when Jesus came to them as on this day. In order, therefore, to know Christ, we must learn how intimately He knows us—just as it is His love for us which helps us most when we try to love Him.

(3) After meeting his Lord on the road to Damascus, it was natural that St. Paul should also think of Him as One for Whose appearing he could look at any moment of day or night. If in an ordinary Eastern day, on the dusty road, all things continuing as they were, the Lord

could appear all at once to His servant as he journeyed on, he might well look for His appearing on any day or at any hour.

And in that wonderful meeting with the risen Jesus St. Paul had heard from the lips of his Lord a declaration which was the warrant for the truth specially committed to his charge—that His Church on earth stands to the Lord of all in a special relation as His body.

“Why persecutest thou *Me*?” was the illuminating question put to him who should be the chosen herald of the mystery (apart from which all knowledge of Him is incomplete), that Christ is the Head of the body, the Church.

So St. Paul came to learn that the faithful are united to Christ in the one body, and in Him, if they are living members, they have the redemption from sin, and peace with God, the peace of Easter Day, even here and now.

But if the apostle was to make all this knowledge of Jesus as the Lord and Head of the Church his very own, he would have to know Him still better through fellowship with Him as a personal living Friend. And for us, too, to know Him and the power of His resurrection

depends upon our accepting in reverent familiarity the gracious offer which He makes of being our Friend.

Our Friend He is, risen from the dead not only that we may be *in Him*, but offering to be Himself *in us* by His Spirit, the true Life of our life here, and the hope of the glory that shall be revealed. That life may be hidden deep down behind the mystery of our bodily and intellectual life, but it is a power that will work mightily from within outwards, until even the body of our humiliation is conformed to the body of His glory. Why should there be doubt of this? Who can measure even here the wonder of the power that is at work all around us at this springtide, mysteriously veiled but calling out forms of marvellous beauty and the promise of the coming harvest?

The Corinthian Church did not deny the fact of the resurrection of Christ, and were ready to acknowledge that a resurrection had been wrought already by the spirit in the regenerate. But the error which St. Paul withstands with such splendid earnestness and eloquence is the denial of a resurrection from the dead, a resurrec-

tion of the body which he shows must issue from the fact which they fully accept—that Christ is risen—and has to be known as the Representative and Head of His people, the firstfruits of them that sleep.

These two subjects of knowledge which St. Paul considered worth more than all other learning—the personal Christ and the power of His resurrection, are just what we need to know now more than anything else in the world.

(1) To know Him is to know One who lights up the mystery beyond, into which we are all passing, with the radiance from His human form streaming from the fountain of His personal Godhead, making a human as well as a Divine centre of His glorious kingdom. Hence it is that from the other side the human voice will be heard as it was by St. Paul, the human hand will touch us as it did St. John, and our eyes shall behold even in the very midst of the Throne Jesus Who was crucified.

Heaven will not be any more a vague, undefined magnificence of unbearable splendour, but a true home for the least of the faithful servants of God.

(2) But not only in the world beyond, but even here and now, we have the risen Lord before us as dominating the situation in which He has placed us, and controlling the circumstances of our life and the events that are happening in our age. He is Head over all things for us; and within the fellowship of His body, the Church, He is Himself within us, the power of His resurrection.

And nothing less than this same resurrection power is needed to lift us up from setting our affections on things on the earth instead of on the truth and righteousness and love which belong to Him. Nothing less is needed to quicken our souls when they cleave to the dust. We sorely need it—but it is within our reach because Christ is within our reach.

To-day, on this Easter Day, He waits to be our Friend and Companion in life, to commune with us as a Friend; to teach us, whether by revelation within, or through life's discipline and training, with its joys and sufferings, more and more of the knowledge of Himself and the power of His resurrection.

THE CHURCH OF THE
RESURRECTION

Easter-tide

XII

“Then the end.”—I COR. xv. 24.

“Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, Unto him be the glory in the Church and in Christ Jesus unto all generations for ever and ever. Amen.”—EPIHES. iii. 20, 21.

HAVING taught us what we need to know about our Lord's appearing and the resurrection from the dead of those who shall be found in Him, has St. Paul anything to tell us of what is still beyond? The resurrection will obviously be the entrance upon a new order of life, the beginning of a new age, or of the ages of the ages.

Have we now a good hope of being in living union with the risen and glorified Christ?

Let us place ourselves in thought on the other side of these two great events of our coming experience.

We are risen, we have met Christ. The Lord has appeared; we have seen Him, even as St.

Thomas did. The last trumpet, even the trump of God has sounded; in the Paradise of God and in the chambers of the dead, the voice of the Son of God has reached us with its insistent summons, and we have *come forth*. The corruptible has put on incorruption; this mortal has put on immortality. Having seen Him as He is, the body of our humiliation has been conformed to the body of His glory. The companies of the redeemed who had fallen asleep, now radiant in their white robes, have been joined by their brethren who had been alive at the coming, and have gathered round the Captain of their salvation: never again to be separated.

What will happen now?

St. Paul suggests that a joyful solemnity will be celebrated, which St. John tells us will be heralded by the voice of a great multitude, as of many waters and mighty thunderings—"The marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready." The Church, says St. Paul, has to be *presented* by Christ to Himself "as a *glorious Church*, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing." Ah! now at last

our commonwealth in heaven has been fashioned by the Spirit into the *holy city*. The Church of the seven golden candlesticks with its Sardis of garments defiled and a name without life—and Laodicea, lukewarm and wretched, has now been transfigured into the new Jerusalem with its very streets of pure gold. Our greatest trial on earth was that we ourselves and the Church of which we were members were so different from God's ideal! But now the glory of God doth lighten her, and her light is the Lamb. Oh! what joy to know her fairer than any vision that eye hath seen or heart of man could conceive—and her people are all righteous; her sons are priests unto God; her citizens are kings.

But these splendours of holiness are for the glorified Church and her members the signs and tokens of a spiritual estate—and character—upon which, and not upon heaven as a locality, the emphasis is laid by the apostle. This intrinsic character is summed up by him in three words, (a) life, (b) glory, (c) kingdom. The first is life (*Ζωή*)—eternal life, the adjective having reference to quality rather than duration; life which is not then inaugurated for the first time,

but is the development of the life already possessed here by the true believer, and which is the very life of Christ. It is realized in the knowledge of God, at present fragmentary—but then we shall know even as we are known. The child of God has already begun his eternal life in fellowship and communion with the Father, and in that worship and service of love with which he will go on when he shall see His face. As St. Paul wrote, he was able to speak of Clement and others whose names were written in the “Book of Life.” But life there will not be clogged by a dying body or a torpid soul. The whole man will be aglow with a life that is alive with Christ’s life in body, soul and spirit.

The second word of St. Paul is *glory*, which is specially applicable to the inheritance of the *saints in light*, but which again is used to denote the excellence of the gift ministered under the present dispensation of the Church. Its ministration even now exceeds in glory because the spirit is ministered in the body of Christ, and we all with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror (or reflecting as a mirror) the glory of the

Lord are transformed into the same image from glory to glory even as from the Lord the Spirit. It is a real glory not yet expressed in bright shining of our face until the face of the Lord is unveiled to the bodily eye.

And the third significant term is *kingdom*. The kingdom of a social order of which Christ is head into which we have been translated—and the kingdom also of an interior temper of righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost : but hereafter it will be the kingdom of the Father in which His servants who overcome shall reign with Christ, some over five, some over ten cities : some shall sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel : all uniting in the song of praise—"Thou wast slain, Thou hast made us a kingdom. We shall reign on the earth."

There is one beautiful and attractive prospect for the Church of the resurrection, likely to touch the heart of man which longs for personal kindness, to which St. Paul looks forward. After speaking of the great things which the Lord hath done for us already, he tells us that they are all with a view to something more being

shown to us in Christ, even the exceeding riches of His grace (undeserved goodness) in *kindness* towards us in the ages that are coming on. All the ages that are coming upon us will not exhaust the stores of fresh continuous kindness towards us begun here in love and forgiveness in Christ Jesus.

Nor, on the other hand, thank God! will the Church be ever at a loss or too weary for responding with *Gloria* and *Te Deum* and songs always new though old for blessings beyond all word or thought. For St. Paul's great doxology takes a sweep beyond all imaginable heights and depths of love yet felt and knowledge gained, and becomes a prophecy of ages ringing with thanksgiving: "Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly *above* all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto Him *be the glory in the Church and in Christ Jesus*, unto all the generations of the *Age of the Ages*."

The mystery of the Marriage of the Lamb will be followed by the other mystery; the delivery of the kingdom to the Father.

But will the Church of Eternity have for ever

to part with that which, next to the worship of God, is her chiefest joy on earth, as it was her Master's, to minister to the less blessed and those that are out of the way. There will still be certainly the resurrection of the unjust and those outside, and those who are shut up in prison. Can she reach them or help them?

Towards some portion of God's universe there will be, we doubt not, ministry and service required of the Church, which will then occupy, at the very heart and centre of the creation of God, a position of privilege and honour. To reign is to serve.

To touch only a fragment of a vast subject, the question has been raised whether we are to understand St. Paul as meaning in his revelation that *the end*—the *goal* of all history—"that far-off divine event" when the Christ shall have put down all hostile forces—all rule and all authority and power of whatever kind opposed to God and righteousness, so that evil will not lift up its head—will be at the moment of His appearing, and immediately concurring with the resurrection and the glorification of His Church? or whether there will be still a period

undefined after the Church is enthroned with Christ in the heavenly places before the great descent to *earth* of the holy city with her Lord, during which the subjection of the enemy's confederate forces will be completed? Can death be said to be "abolished," or God to be "all in all," and the great consummation perfected, when any are delivered over alive to the second death, and wills are holding out still against the will of Him Who willeth all men to be saved? One of our best Greek Testament scholars has held that the "THEN" ("*then* cometh the end") may quite fairly admit of an interval of any length—between the rising of them that are Christ's at His coming—and the final "end," when Christ shall deliver up the kingdom to the Father, having put down all things under His feet and having drawn to Himself, as He knows how, all men and all wills.

This view is very strongly contested, and I am bound to say that so far as St. Paul's language and teaching are concerned, it seems to me at least that there is not sufficient ground for such expectation. It seems alien to the apostle's standpoint to associate the revelation of the re-

turning Lord with a further process of conflict. As an instance of his point of view, take his description of the "lawless one" whom the Lord Jesus shall destroy by the breath of His mouth and abolish by the manifestation of His coming. Even the context of such an expression as "God shall be all in all" points to its application to the willing mind and the life given into the charge of Christ. Still there is this to be said, that of the future of those outside, St. Paul declines for the most part to give any judgment or anticipation except in general terms.

But as we cannot enter fully into the question in the brief time allotted to a sermon, let me quote a passage from a book of Bishop Westcott's to show the conclusion which such a student of God's word feels justified in drawing from the sacred writings on the side of hope looking far on into the ages—

"Two thoughts bearing upon the future find clear expression in the New Testament. The one is of the *consequences* of unrepented sin as answering to the sin; the other of a final unity in which God shall be all in all. We read of an "eternal sin," of a sin which has no forgiveness

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in this world or in the world to come . . . of eternal destruction; of the worm that dieth not and the fire that is not quenched. And on the other side we read of "the purpose of the good pleasure of God to sum up all things in Christ, and through Him to reconcile all things unto Himself, whether things upon the earth or things in the heavens, of the bringing to naught the last enemy, death, and the final subjection of all things to God."

"We must wait for the reconciliation of both these sides of revealed truth, not turning away from one or the other—but trusting that the ruling idea will be found to be the idea of a *final Divine* lenity manifested in the end."

Yes! we must wait! And for ourselves and all whom God will give us in Christ—by a greater than any interpreter of his teaching—we are led by St. Paul himself to the steps of the throne of the King of the Ages, which is also the throne of grace.

We look up—and see Jesus; we see Him Who loved the Church and gave Himself for it; and Who wills that all men should be saved; Who is the Head of the creation of God; Who yet

proudly bears the memorials of His atoning death, by which He has claimed the right to forgive and restore the fallen and the lost. He is the supreme power in the universe. In His heart there is pity; in His hands is power; His will is to deliver the poor and needy, to save them from the power of the oppressor. We see not yet all things put under Him—not yet—for, terrible as it is to confess, many even of His brethren will not come—will not come to Him that they may live! We trust Him wholly, He is faithful to Himself and to man, to the universe and to God. He is Jesus Christ; the same yesterday and to-day—yea! and for ever!

WORSHIP, THE WORK OF A
CATHEDRAL CHURCH

Ascensiontide

XIII

“And having a great high priest over the house of God, let us draw near.”—HEB. X. 21, 22.

THE primary business of a cathedral church and its staff is to *keep up continually the solemn worship of Almighty God*, and that, too, with as much stateliness as may be, for a witness to all men of the royal majesty of Him Who is both the object and leader of our worship. At His Ascension Jesus entered as head of our race and our great High Priest over the house of God into the holiest of all, that we might enter too, and not, even in this life, wait outside.

This is what we are bold to do in Him; and to keep heaven open, that the angels of God may ascend and descend on the body of Christ, is a more than sufficient reason for continual services.

At such a festival it is only fitting that we should consider again some facts and principles which lie at the back of our corporate worship,

lest what is constant should haply become merely formal and unspiritual.

Our worship, then, means first of all the public recognition of the holy personality and sovereignty of God; it is the glad and intelligent confession of our dependence on Him as His creatures; and a preparation and training for the great future of the vision of God, when we shall see Him as He is. To worship is to put ourselves in correspondence with the great reality in the presence of which we always stand. A man who does not worship is not in true relation with the great fact of the universe, which is none other than the Throne of God and of the Lamb at the heart of it. The duty of worship does not rest only upon a command of God, but is the natural expression of life as His creatures, of what we are to God and what God is to us. And in any case, even for the unfallen, worship is a reasonable service and sacrifice. Sacrifice is the acknowledgment of God's sovereignty, through the offering to Him first of self and then of some part of our life, and this quite apart from pain and sin. It is the utterance in act and word of the truth: "All things come of Thee, and of

Thine own have we given Thee." St. Augustine says that to worship is to keep up the tie of fellowship with God; and when we come to worship we feel that He is the creator and we His creatures, and therefore fellowship must be on the basis of sacrifice. But inasmuch as through our fall we have broken by sin the bond of happy fellowship and made ourselves unfit for communion with the Holy One, our worship and sacrifice must rest upon an atonement or propitiation. For according to an eternal law in the constitution of God's world of order, the life that might have been offered to Him in happy restful acceptance of His love and of our dependence upon Him is forfeited through sin. Therefore it comes to pass that, as was confessed in the old order of the Jewish dispensation, and even in the Gentile world that was feeling after God, worship involves reconciliation and expiation of sin, for sin must otherwise be a barrier between us and heaven.

But the full and perfect recognition of the holy sovereignty and fatherhood of God and of the creature's entire dependence upon Him has been made by our great High Priest, the repre-

sentative of humanity and of all the creation of God. As our great High Priest over the house of God and the Firstborn of the creation, He looked on through the agony of the forsaking by His Father, with which the twenty-second Psalm begins, to the future of unbroken fellowship with which it ends: "In the midst of the Church will I praise Thee." He is not only the great intercessor but the great worshipper, the head of His brethren, who can now offer their freewill offerings in the day of His power.

This worship of the Mediator may be the expression and revelation in human nature of that giving back to the Father, as the Divine Son from all eternity, of the glory which He had with the Father before the world was, in that beginning when the unbeginning Word already was, and was with God, or facing God, looking towards Him, reflecting back to the Father all that He had from Him, and in a mystery living the true life of Sonship, of Divine priesthood and of worship.

But because He is now also the Son of Man and represents a race that is fallen, it is needful that He should open the way, with the right of

entrance for us into the holiest with His blood—that is to say, with a life which has passed through death, and carries with it the virtue of full atonement. The great High Priest is also the Lamb in the midst of the throne. As the Priest He must have somewhat to offer, and He offers Himself once for all sacrificed for us, that in the eternal Spirit we may keep the feast of blessed fellowship with the Father in heaven. He is in His Person and Office the standing witness that man cannot do without God, and he can now approach God in One Who is infinitely acceptable, and in Whom the guilt which stood in the way of his free access is done away.

So it is for this end that our ascended Lord has entered the highest heaven. And what is our own part in worship? It consists in linking ourselves on with what Christ is and with what He is doing, in identifying ourselves with Him and His ministry. Our worship does not aim at starting a new action, but in falling into line with that which is perpetually going on in the presence of God, and taking our part in it. We come to place ourselves in union with that undying, unceasing offering of Himself in Whom

we also are offered by Him. The question is *how this is to be done?*

(1) From the first, with a view to our need, worship has been arranged by Almighty God Himself. Principles of worship to meet the case of fallen man were no doubt revealed in Paradise. Man learnt how to approach the Lord against Whom he had sinned through the loving-kindness which “devised means to bring the banished home.” And so Abel worshipped acceptably, while Cain was rejected for self-will in offering. Later on the services of the tabernacle were ordained after the pattern in the mount, when Israel was called to be a nation of priests. A certain rest to the soul was also obtained through the Gentile sacrifices, as we see from the Greek poets, while yet deep in the heart of man was the conviction that the blood of bulls and of goats could never take away sin. Then, finally, being about to make the great atonement on the cross, on which all true worship rests, and to which as the Lamb of God He was sealed, our Lord instituted that ordinance through which most completely in union with Himself we are borne into the holiest of all, in

that mystery whereby we are in Christ and Christ in us, we are brought near to the throne and are bold to say—

Look, Father, look on His anointed face,
And only look on us as found in Him;

For lo! between our sins and their reward,
We set the passion of Thy Son our Lord.

(2) And thus in that service and in the offices which gather round Holy Communion, such as Mattins and Evensong, we do in very deed and truth enter into the *holiest*. For there is the Temple of the living God; *not two*—(one in heaven and another separate from it on earth) but a counterpart of the heavenly Tabernacle where there is only one House of God, just as this cathedral is one, though divided into the sanctuary and choir and nave, and over it our great High Priest; and His House we are, if we hold fast our confession. The holiest is an order of life in which, without changing our place or passing over a distant chasm in space, we are in touch with Him Who is in the midst of the Throne. The way has been opened up through His flesh, and we enter in with the power of the risen life in the blood of the everlasting covenant sur-

rounding us as an atmosphere and penetrating our souls, making us one body with Him Who acknowledges us as His own in the very midst of the Throne. And so we come, as the Scripture assures us, right up unto Mount Zion and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem . . . and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant and to the blood of sprinkling.

Into the question of the offering that the whole body of the royal priesthood is called to make before the eternal Father and its relation to the offering on the cross we cannot enter now. In order to guard ourselves and others from the too prevalent neglect, if not contempt, of worship, we need nothing so much as a lively and intelligent faith in that splendid privilege of "*drawing near*" in the holiest of all and of access to the Father which is the chief glory of the sons of God—and also a serious consideration of the magnificence and tremendous cost of the Divine plan through which this right was secured for sinful man: the conditions were nothing less than the Incarnation, Death, Resurrection and Ascension of the Son of God. The writer of this epistle warns some of his hearers,

who were given to forsaking of the assembling of themselves through fear of persecution and loss of goods and life, that they must resist such beginning of apostasy even unto blood.

Nowadays there is rather the notion that there is not much in worship after all, neither of glory to God nor good to man. Yet there is still the *High Priest over the house of God*, and to associate ourselves with Him in worship and intercession must be of all prerogatives won for man the noblest and the most effective.

(3) Then, again, with the diminished awe of God and of the sense of the horror of sin, and also a feebler consciousness of the need of any Mediator or Redeemer, the claim is made for some form of philanthropy or service of man which shall be a sufficient substitute for a worship of God resting on the great sacrifice of Christ. But the unselfish service of man is best secured when it is made part of our offering and oblation to God, and human nature cannot go on ignoring its highest possibilities of communion with its God without losing correspondence and adjustment with the central, abiding fact of the universe. There will probably be a reaction to

strange credulity and superstition if a people lives so that it can be truly said to it of material prosperity and civilization, "These be thy Gods, O Israel."

But there is no such effective persuasion to worship as the *personal experience* of its power to enlarge vision and to bind fast the soul to that unchanging life and love which is behind the veil where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God. If a man be a worshipper of God and do His will, he shall learn for himself its power and joy. Let us, therefore, take heed, brethren, *how* we worship.

And if once you realize that you are already in the Holiest of all, you know that you cannot be there only for spiritual luxury, but that, even as the great High Priest now over the House of our God is there for us, you must take your part in ministry to the world and to the Church of God. He ever liveth to make intercession for us.

OUR LORD'S ABIDING PRESENCE
IN HIS CHURCH

Pentecost

XIV

“And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write : These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars ; I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead.”—REV. iii. 1, 2.

“I will come to you. . . . The world seeth me no more ; but ye see me.”—JOHN xiv. 18, 19.

THIS promise of our Lord, fulfilled in His coming to be in the midst of us at Pentecost, has been ever since the great characteristic fact and glory of the Church. As the fragrance from a garden may come with a breeze, and a word in a moment be borne over seas and continents by a spark of fire or some material or ethereal medium, so, only in a much truer reality, did the risen and ascended Christ, in and with His gift of His Holy Spirit, come to abide with us.

This blessed fact it was, which the Lord sent and signified by His servant John, in the pictures and symbols of the wonderful vision which is the preface to the Book of the Revelation,

and in which, with St. John's eyes, we see the Son of Man in the midst of the seven Churches, representative of the universal Church of all time, holding in His hand the seven spirits of God. He is the centre and pivot of all resurrection and eternal life in the Church, and by His Spirit brings all Divine forces to bear upon His body and each individual member of it. Whoever may be the earthly minister in any province or diocese or parish of the Church, it is clearly signified that it is with the Personal Christ, the one chief Minister and Royal Priest of the Divine Society, we each and all have to do. It is He Who deals with us, has accounts to settle with us, rebukes, chastens, revives and rewards us now, no less than He did the Bishop or any one of the Christians whose names He knew at Sardis. What wonder, then, that when this new Presence of the Lord and His intimate relation with the soul is realized, as He moves about in our midst in all His Divine love and majesty and power, as well as in the perfection of His risen, undying humanity, His servant, made conscious of his own sinfulness under the steadfast look of His holy eyes, should fall at His feet as dead—from

a death like this, in which the sense of corruption has overpowered the soul, the touch of the living Jesus can uplift it, putting aside fear and amazement. "Fear not; I am the Living One." "I am He that liveth and was dead."

But the *state of death* which He finds in Sardis is quite a different matter. There was but little *sense of sin* or conscious need of peace and resurrection grace. There was a semblance of life, the appearance of vitality; what form that appearance of life assumed we are not told. It may possibly have been a show of religious life such as few would care to put on now when religion is not the fashion, and when more often than not men take credit to themselves for not making a profession of religion. They would rather not act as if they cared very much for unseen realities or had strong religious convictions or believed in the necessity of a right faith. It is not a recommendation for social or political influence that a man should go very much to church or be known as a champion for "the faith once delivered to the saints." There are other ways nowadays in which a man may have a name that he lives and yet be dead. For

instance, I may be speaking to some one here to whom I could fairly say : You are very much alive in the outside of your being because you have a keen interest, say, in literature, or art, or politics, or science ; and there is no reason at all why you should not ; or, you may even have much sympathy and be actively engaged with schemes of philanthropy, questions of improving conditions of life for the poor and the wretched. Like the woman of Samaria and the Sadducees, who proposed a problem about marriage to our Lord, you may eagerly discuss theological questions ; but I appeal to you whether it is not possible to feel this stir of even religious life on the surface [I know a man with wealth and power at his command who has acknowledged as much] without being really alive unto God at the very centre and heart of your being.

Bear with me while I ask you : do you feel that you could not do without earnestly sought forgiveness and pardon of your sins ? Would you be ready to give anything in the world to know Him and the power of His resurrection ? Do you walk day by day in the sunshine of the loving mercy of your heavenly Father ? Do you

fall back upon communion with the Holy Spirit for hourly help in temptation and trouble and for revival when your "soul cleaveth unto the dust"? Can you confirm by your own experience the truth that life in the Church of God means a life of personal fellowship with the living and present Christ? Ask yourself whether, while you have a name amongst your fellows that you are full of life, you really might not be more justly reckoned to have part and lot with one of whom St. Paul said severely, "She that liveth in pleasure," making pleasure the law of life, "is *dead* while she liveth." Possibly another might be akin to those of whom it can scarcely be said that they *are truly alive* to anything except, perhaps, to impressions of the weather, or passing sense of their own comfort. The question is whether you have the life of which St. John speaks, "He that hath the Son hath life," or just the indifference of which our Lord sorrowfully observed, "They will not come to Me that they may have life." If so, then, though thou hast a name that thou livest, thou art dead, that is to say, *as good as dead*, on the way to death, sure to die unless you lay hold of

life: for, as we shall see, the representative Christian Church of Sardis was not actually dead, her name not *yet* blotted out of the Book of Life, though the chill and numbing paralysis of death had begun. If this be too strong a word to describe your own case—and do not let us be unreal—ask yourselves: Does your religion make you happy, does it give you joy and power? Does it show to others what a good and joyful thing it is for you to have been baptized into the One Body, and made to drink into the One Spirit? If not, is there not a lack of life somewhere? So what you feel you want is *life*, and more abundant life.

Whether this fuller life, or the life of resurrection from the dead, be your need, “Hear what the Spirit saith to the Churches.”

St. John makes it quite clear that even in such a Church as Sardis, ready to die if left to itself, the living Christ is at hand with the energy of His Spirit at His disposal both to raise the dead and to quicken and renew life. That is to say, there is a living Person, outside and yet most near, through whose touch resurrection life may pass into your soul. Of His presence and

activity the Pentecostal Church, continuing to this day, is the sign and sacramental witness. He exerts His power in the Church through the sevenfold Spirit and acts upon the all-but-dead soul which turns to Him. Because He holds the Spirit, He has all that you want for life.

You must be ready to learn the truth, the whole truth which He knows about you: even if His judgment of your condition is so stern and sad—"Thou hast a name that thou livest; and thou art dead." You must not shut your ears to what He tells you by His Spirit and through your conscience. If you are on your way to death it is best to know it; if no works of yours are finished well, and nothing thorough, it is kind of Him to let you know it that you may do better and live through Him.

It was because the city of Sardis, when it was capital of Cræsus, had one weak spot in its fortification and its watch and guard was not complete, that it was taken by Cyrus; and strangely enough, in spite of the serious warning in its past history, it was captured again 300 years later through the same failure to be watchful all round.

Therefore watch and *strengthen* the things that *remain*. All is not lost when there are things which remain to be strengthened and stablished. If you say your prayers only occasionally, say them in future daily, morning and evening, reverently, thoughtfully, trustfully. If you read your Bible now and then, begin one of the Gospels and read it through, a few verses at a time, day by day. If you go to Church only just when you feel inclined, attend regularly as a matter of dutiful service and homage to your Lord. Do not rest until, as a devout communicant, you receive, with preparation beforehand and thanksgiving after, the Divine pledge of eternal life. Do you remember the plan of life you resolved to follow at your confirmation? Then repent and do the first works. Awake thou that sleepest, and stir up the life that is in thee still.

And now the Lord who will renew your life bids you *remember how thou hast received*. Pentecost will never come over again; the Spirit has been given as the personal inhabitant of the body of Christ once for all, and He is with us to-day as truly as He ever was with the Church

of old to quicken and revive, to make us know the things which are freely given to us of God. The reference to the wind blowing where it listeth, while we cannot tell whence it cometh or whither it goeth, does not attribute any capricious or arbitrary action to the Spirit, as if He acted on the soul without reverence for order. This is not said of the Spirit, but of the man that is born of the Spirit who is not to be accounted for by what are called natural causes, who is a mystery, a new creation from above, the result of a personal supernatural force whose goings forth cannot be measured and limited by our philosophy. The old faith, once delivered to the saints, and the old gospel that Christ died and rose again and is alive for evermore, are still the power of God unto salvation. The message of the Spirit to the Church universal and to our own Church and every member of the same, is still the same as was given to Sardis: "Remember how thou hast received and repent."

Last of all, in order that you may live, Christ offers to you His great and blessed promises for your spirit to rest upon. Dwell upon them;

make much of them. He is ready to clothe you in white raiment; the passionate prayer of the penitent can be answered: "Thou shalt wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow." Even in Sardis there were a few names which did not defile their garments. Through the power of the precious blood you may be numbered here and now amongst that white-robed company, the great multitude which keep holy day in the city of God. And who, O happy symbol of true liberty and freedom! walk with the Christ in white.

Together with this promise take home to your heart His blessed assurance—"I will in no wise blot his name out of the Book of Life." Make the most of the unspeakable privilege that your name is *still there*, where it was enrolled at your baptism, even though you may be on the point of exchanging, for a false, delusive appearance of life, the substance of life eternal. Your name is not yet quite faded or blotted out from the pages of the register of the citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of life and light. So far from willing that it should no more be found there, Christ would have it shine out in

letters radiant with the brightness of His Spirit, until He can rehearse it when He writeth up the people of God, and own it as He gladly will as dear and precious to Himself, before His Father and before His angels.

UNIVERSITY SERMON

*Preached in New College, Oxford, on Trinity
Sunday, 1905*

XV

“ He looked for the city which hath the foundations, whose builder and maker is God.”—HEB. xi. 10.

HEAVEN has been not inaptly described as the *home of realized ideals*.

Worthy and noble ideals, we know, may be suggested by earth, and prove helpful and inspiring, but no one looks for them to be perfectly fulfilled here.

How often in the experience of those of us whose work has been largely, as a matter of duty, an endeavour to lay in the colonies or elsewhere abroad the foundations of a fair and true order of human life for the future, have our hearts gone back to England and to its heritage of great ideals, written large on its historic monuments and institutions! You know how one of the most practical minds of our day,¹ which has strongly influenced the destinies of

¹ Cecil Rhodes.

South Africa, was moved to the laudable ambition of adding to the foundations of this university by a vision of ideal college life, brooding high above the dust of the diamond fields and his ventures for wealth. His "pattern in the mount" was a college in Oxford, rooted in the past and in sympathy with the humanity of to-day, parting with nothing of venerable tradition or honourable custom, to which the fresh and characteristic life of other lands might be linked on and become instinct with the spirit drawn from a treasure-house of good both new and old.

And how full of grace and power to any man may be the ideal of the common life of an ancient college, in its trinity of combined elements—not lacking the representation of paternal authority, or the fellowship of sons in their own household, or the spirit of movement and energy astir in the company of young men, face to face with the hopes and struggles of the future!

Such a common life cannot be only a survival from an age of poor students and of efforts for self-help and protection—merely the outcome of a dim perception of utility. The glad conscious-

ness of a society finds expression, not in the utterance, "Behold! how *useful* a thing it is, brethren," but "How good and *joyful* a thing it is to dwell together in unity."

It was once said that if there were no God it would be necessary to invent one. The consideration of things as they are would almost require the hypothesis of a Trinity in the Godhead, even if, as a matter of fact, this were not a mystery historically revealed in the personal self-manifestation of the Divine Being. In order to account for diversity in the highest and noblest unities, it is a help to be otherwise convinced that in the very heart and being of the Deity the ideal of Society has existed from everlasting. Granting that there is a Holy Trinity in the Godhead to begin with, it is what we may call natural that divers forces, as they may seem to be, such as matter, ether and motion, should be really as one in the universe; and that, moreover, there should be in humanity the family, the nation, and the Divine organization of the Church to end with. Through the second Person in the Godhead, as we believe, by Whom all things were made and in Whose immediate image

man was, by whatever process, created, the likeness of the eternal Trinity was impressed upon humanity. An impulse was thus communicated to this new order of life, which has urged it upward from within to its high type of social development. From the earliest periods it took the form of a patriarchal system, with which we are familiar in South Africa : "The tribe is there a community, or collection of natives, forming a political and social organization under the permanent control and leadership of a chief who is the centre of the national or tribal life. It is through the existence of a chief that the tribe is conscious of its unity. As the father is to the family, so is the chief to the tribe." It is through the providential training of a like impulse that the human race at its best, in the fulness of time, came to be conscious of its unity and to find it in the incarnate Christ. And the great acceptance or refusal had to be made when, at the historic moment, He came and offered Himself to be its chief and Lord. In order to crown its development a Divine life from the primal source above had to meet the impulse from within. Man had to receive God and to be baptized into the holy

Triune Name, so that in corporate life, uniting earth and heaven, he might fulfil his destiny both individually and socially. Human society has too much of the life Divine breathed into it for it to be perfected in isolation from God. Even the material earth, though far removed from it, owns another centre than itself, and is upheld by the genial influences of the sun and of the remotest star in the furthest depths of the heavens. The society of this ancient college, you will readily grant, could not have been established, or held together in the past, or grown up to such measure of attractive power as it possesses now, if it had been separated from the influences brought to bear upon the social life here by this glorious Chapel and all that it stands for in the kingdom of God.

When society anywhere has attained a capacity for life from above, and turns away from the offer of it, it can never be simply what it was before. In the unsatisfied heart of it a void is left which evil powers and forces of degeneration are sure to invade and occupy.

We are standing now, as it seems to me—perhaps not for the first time—at a moment of

history when great issues have to be determined for the future of the nations and peoples making up our empire, comprehending as it does one quarter of the world's inhabitants, in manifold variety and stages of development. An answer has to be given to the multitudes seeking for a true and stable order of human life—really looking, though unconsciously, for the city which hath the foundations. What pattern of social life are we prepared to hold up to them? Will it be that of the eternal city coming down from God out of heaven from the bosom of the ever blessed Trinity, or some design for organizing human society apart from God and His revelation in Christ, or a careless indifference about the drift of humanity, as if all were the sport of chance and accident or of a blind fate? This is the great social question at home and abroad. Forgive me if I dare to say that the issue does not seem to be fully faced. It is one, however, fraught with social life or death for communities over a large portion of the globe. If we may speak in the picturesque language of St. John, where, in the revelation given to him, he unveils the final outcome of tendencies and forces now

at work, we see the goal must be either *Babylon* or *Jerusalem*, the city of God. And his conclusion is none the less philosophical because it is poetical and prophetic; and it is also intensely practical, for the one city or the other is even now *in the making* by ourselves.

It has been well said that a great city is "first the ambition and then the despair of man." In any case, it seems to be the destined goal of his life here. And in spite of all failures of city life, we are assured that God has prepared for them that obey His call just the city for which Abraham looked, which hath the foundations in the Divine will and eternal purpose.

On the other hand, man himself may become the builder of a city from which God is excluded, whether on the banks of the Euphrates, or the Tiber, or the Thames. And wherever social life is arranged without thought of God or room for Him, with no vision or worship of God, but with only self or man as the centre, *there* is Babylon, and there, in the end, is confusion and every evil work.

The picture of Babylon in the Revelation is drawn with a master and even sympathetic hand.

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It is meant to convey the impression of a great community of life and activity: all stir and brightest gaiety, commerce and industry, with interests of every sort and kind, wealth of colour, art and music, and gems and light, the sound of the millstone, the song of the bridegroom, the voice of the bride. And Babylon does not fall because of its wealth or beauty. Indeed, there is no stint of precious stones, or gold, or music, or fair linen in Jerusalem itself. But there is one notable omission in the sketch of its community life, which accounts for its ruin. *There is in it no Throne of God and of the Lamb*: no memorial of the presence and reign of Almighty God, nor of man's need of forgiveness. Neither is there any river of water of resurrection life to quench the thirst of the immortal soul, which can really be satisfied by nothing short of the living God. A similar philosophy of history is given in plain, severe prose by St. Paul in the beginning of his letter to the Romans. He traces the course of degeneracy in the civilized world (which we thankfully allow was not without fair oases of character and goodly types of family life) first of all to the neglect of worship and rejection of

religion : "When they knew God they glorified Him not as God, neither gave thanks." This indifference to God leads to folly and darkness of mind and reversion to a low type of morals, and withal an assumption of superior wisdom : "Professing themselves to be wise they became fools." Perversion of instincts and depravity of conduct ends in a carnival of anti-social vices. The whole result is a state which is socially intolerable. In fact, Babylon the great becomes the mother of her own ruin, "the habitation of demons and the hold of every unclean spirit." It is not that she is punished for merely a breach of positive law—but society detached from the source of true progress and renewal of pure and fresh life falls back under the shadow of death and the grip of the powers of darkness. And the heavens rejoice at her fall out of very sympathy for the earth which she corrupts.

In the ideal society, on the other hand, it may be enough that for the modern mind the picture of the holy city presents small attraction and much that seems unreal in its imagery; yet, after all, it is a translation into symbol of our Lord's profound account of His own mission to

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the human race: "I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly." The God who has prepared so thoughtfully for our sojourning here has not taken thought the less for the completeness of human nature in that heavenly commonwealth which He has prepared for His sons and daughters to be their home for ever. From first to last it is intensely human.

(1) Its negative feature, to begin with, must surely appeal at once to the men of our day. What trouble does he spare now for any possible chance of saving himself from the pain and death and curse of each of which it shall be said there: "This shall be no more"?

(2) Then what else but the variety and splendour of personal and social life is represented by the concourse of the nations, the multitudes that keep holy day, and the kings of the earth bringing their glory and honour of intellect, sagacity and power into the courts of the King of kings? The splendid resources of the world are not to be flung away, but brought in due subordination to the true light, and glorified.

(3) The power of *abundant* life is also assured by the twofold symbols of (a) the river of life

flowing from the source of victory over death, and (b) the tree of life bearing its varied fruit every month for perpetual renewal of eternal life.

(4) Its central glory, however, and fount of light and life, making the whole difference between it and Babylon, is the *Throne of God and of the Lamb*, which is at the heart of all its varied, abounding life, and which chills no joy or freedom of any who serve their Creator and Redeemer under its shadow.

(5) And for His loyal and faithful servants also there remains the great vision of the FACE OF CHRIST, in whom they behold the archetype of all human glory and beauty. For the citizens are men of vision, and realize the character of the wisest and best in Plato's ideal state: "They stand on the one hand in continual contact with eternal reality, and on the other with the human activities of the city." So "they shall see His face." Though they constitute a royal race and reign for ever, they manifest also, as those who serve, the highest qualities of energy and power. And having the Father's name written on their forehead, they are sealed for the life of glad and

free consecration of all they have and are, by the impress of the Divine Spirit.

And it is just because God dwells with them and they are with God that they have attained the true home for man, who cannot be satisfied, when he wakes up, with any likeness other than His. Beyond all this, there may be some more immediate experience of the beatific vision of the blessed Trinity which may not appeal attractively to us of the West, but it certainly does so to the soul of the contemplative Oriental, as even now the doctrine of the Trinity is found to do to the Buddhist of Burmah. And our Western mind may have something to learn from the East of the power of appreciation of highest and sublime reality. But for us it may suffice that at least we shall find in that city, built up from earth before it comes down from heaven, the very home of those who love the truth and peace, where also the strenuous life of those who overcome shall be crowned with authority to rule and reign over kingdoms that shall have no end. There are some who would fain make it more attractive to us by calling our ideal a city *without a Church*. It would be just

as true to say that the whole is a Temple or Church, which has gathered up into its Divine order all that is truest and best of city life or human interest, only that the glory of God doth lighten it and the Lamb is the light thereof.

I am not afraid to say—and I speak that which I know—that the reality of such an order of life for which this symbol stands is what men of all sorts and conditions are feeling after. And none are better qualified to commend the excellent things of the kingly commonwealth of the city of God to the banished ones than those whose inheritance of inspiration, balanced by the practical mind and knowledge of human nature, are preparing them for a day of great opportunity at home and abroad.

To go forth from such a centre as this and be fellow-builders with the Lord of Jerusalem, not only

“In England’s green and pleasant land,”

but in the spiritual wilderness and solitary place of crowded earthliness, is to have a share in more than angels’ work, which can, indeed, only be done by men—whether lay or in Holy

Orders—and is withal the most Divine in earth or heaven.

It is the Lord's own charge to His remembrancers and watchmen upon His city's walls to give themselves no rest and Him no rest until He shall make Jerusalem a praise in earth and heaven.

But if they are to be worthy of so being fellow-helpers with God and with each Person in His order of the adorable Trinity, in fulfilling this blessed and beautiful purpose of His love and wisdom, they must take good heed in their own hearts and lives, and as far as their influence can reach, to be, by His grace and mercy, "not disobedient to the heavenly vision."

THE GOOD THINGS THAT GOD HATH
PREPARED

Feast of the Transfiguration
(Seventh Sunday after Trinity)

XVI

“As it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit.”—I COR. ii. 9, 10.

THE refrain of the beautiful collect for the past week—(Sixth Sunday after Trinity), “O God, who hast prepared for them that love Thee such good things as pass man’s understanding”—must still ring in our ears and make music in hearts, though our collect for to-day, with its own reference to God’s good things, utters our soul’s desire with scarcely less of beauty and power. The promise which it echoed is borne to our ears over the eventful centuries through the quotation and application of St. Paul, which I have read (already become familiar, perhaps, in the liturgy of the Apostolic Church) from the original of the prophet Isaiah: “When Thou didst terrible things which we looked not for,

Thou camest down, the mountains flowed down at Thy presence, for since the beginning of the world men have not heard nor perceived by the ear; neither hath the eye seen, O God, beside Thee what He hath prepared for him that waiteth for Thee." To wait for God and wait upon God is evidently Isaiah's way of loving Him.

"The good things which God hath prepared"—the words have a pleasant sound, but do they convey to us a meaning definite and clear enough to give a motive for faith and conduct? They ought, indeed, to do so, if it is true that God hath revealed these "good things" unto us by His Spirit.

Let us first try to see what meaning they had, not for the Spirit of Christ which spake by the prophet, but for Isaiah's own consciousness. Interpreted by his visions of the future, the things prepared, of such surpassing excellency were the New Heavens and the New Earth, a new order of nature freed from the curse, with Jerusalem still on earth as the city of the great King, and the capital of the Kingdom of God, where His glory would be openly manifested in the

midst of a righteous people, who would be forgiven their iniquity and healed of their sicknesses. Death would be swallowed up in victory, and tears wiped from off all faces by the Lord God. The moon would be confounded, and the sun ashamed, "when the Lord of Hosts should reign in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem and before His ancients gloriously." Now, much of this language is obviously pictorial and symbolical; but it clearly expresses an anticipation of a perfect order of human life on this earth of ours, in which the glory of the God of Israel would be visibly manifested, as it was on the Holy Mount, and the true Israelites, in fellowship with their own God, be the heirs of blessing for themselves and the world.

Two prominent features come out in the old ideal—the pre-eminence and royalty of the chosen nation, and the fair beauty and wholesomeness of all earthly conditions, of family and citizen life and the physical world around; all transfigured by the light from the visible presence of the Lord Jehovah.

For St. Paul this vision of ancient days, which he accepted as true to the purpose of God, was

already substantially realized, though as yet only partially fulfilled, in the Church of Jesus Christ.

It was in the Church, that society of men and women which St. Paul was so largely instrumental in extending in Corinth and Rome, in Macedonia and Galatia, which the Lord had made His Body, of which the Holy Ghost was the Divine inhabitant, that he found what eye had not seen nor ear heard, and God had been so long in preparing.

Yet if Isaiah had been summoned from the invisible world, as Moses and Elijah had been to meet Christ on the holy mount—and been led by the apostle to the community of Christians at Ephesus or Corinth, and been told that here within its fold there was already come to pass what the Spirit had taught him to see afar off, would he not have been sorely disappointed? The apostles, indeed, men of Israel and Judah, were spiritually rulers and princes, and the word of the Lord had sounded out from Jerusalem, and the Messiah was on the throne of David—out of sight—yet in their midst; but it was after all a poor thing for the bodily eye to look at. Where was the splendour of the glory of the

Lord shining from east to west—and the people, not the wise or the mighty of earth, were still sick and dying—and their righteousness, especially in such a Church as that of Corinth, very far indeed from the holiness that becometh the courts of Him whom the seraphim worshipped. It could not be that his language was exaggerated, or the good things only those of the hidden life. St. Paul, at all events, had no contempt for the outward and bodily, nor believed that God's purpose was complete in some mystical unreal region of human life. "Know ye not," he had cried aloud, "that your bodies are the temple of the Holy Ghost"? He had protested that even the material and visible creation in all its range of ordered life and beauty should share in the great redemption from evil and in the glory of the restitution of all things. This is an essential part of the message of the Gospel which I feel convinced needs to be brought more forcibly before the attention of our people. The hope of the future under Christ as Head embraces not only the spiritual but those elements of life for which, as a matter of fact, they care most at present, the bodily, the social, the in-

tellectual, the artistic. Life as a whole—and each and every part of man's nature will have proportionately its perfect expression and true setting in the things which God hath prepared. The failure to present strongly the hope of the resurrection of the body and restoration of the earth as well as heaven is largely responsible for the false ideals of a heaven without Christ and a new earth without the Church of God, which prevails especially amongst our toiling multitudes, ever at the mercy of those who promise them here a heaven of tolerable ease to be wrested, if need be, from the selfish well-to-do, even at the cost of the ruin of the established social order. They naturally ask for a gospel of relief from the pressure of circumstances so little in correspondence, as they conceive it, with the presence of the Divine—and there is a necessity laid upon us to set forth the great things now within their reach and also the hope of such a fully renovated world as Isaiah declared in a vision, that will surely come to those who wait for God: there is a heaven to be unveiled, not only of spiritual privilege and exaltation, but of perfected human society with outward con-

ditions happily adjusted to the law of love and righteousness. Can we be astonished that the hard-working and often poorly equipped sons of labour lower their ideals to the level of the merely material and transitory, when, even amongst the cultured and highly educated, utopias and ideals for the future are practically suggested as alone worth our pains and efforts, in which the Saviour and Redeemer is dethroned from His supremacy over human life, and His kingdom of forgiveness and life eternal made to vanish as a dream of the night?

In one of these visions of our modern day, exhibiting, with a mixture of fancy, philosophy and science, the serious ideal of not a few of our own generation, we see indeed, a contrast to that city of God which alike was looked for by Isaiah, St. Paul, St. John and St. Augustine.

But with all this there is no gospel of life and immortality to bring cheer to a man sitting in that shadow of death which, in spite of all advance of thought, hangs over the commonwealth. And the more charming and interesting life here becomes, the less inclined must the man be to leave it, unless, as is sure to be the case

when the deepest yearnings of the heart and its highest aspirations are left unsatisfied, an utter weariness and satiety sinks down upon the spirit and makes many a one at any price seek to solve the mystery of the unseen and beyond by passing into it.

After considering this, does it seem uninteresting and uninviting to speak of the good things which God has prepared in His kingdom within your reach, beyond all thought of man to conceive in excellence and glory? of which these, for instance are chief: (a) Reconciliation with the Father (harmony with the mighty personal Power in whom all creation rests); (b) Fellowship with the risen living Christ, His Son; (c) Life through the Spirit for the members of His body in union with the Head.

Are we not often told in the current literature of the day that to present these as the best possible blessings that man can receive or God bestow is out of date and unattractive?

Remember, it is not that good things for body and estate are ignored. These are certainly included in the glad tidings of the Gospel; but life comes first—life for the personality and true manhood—and all other things will be added.

But we must first appreciate them. It is quite true that for the unspiritual man there is no beauty in them that he should desire them. They do not appeal in him, to a felt want; such as that of atonement and forgiveness, or of personal communion with God; he may seem thoroughly to enjoy the life which is not life eternal, and if it would only last he would be quite content.

How, then, is he to come to a right estimate of the really good things?

(1) Their grandeur may be measured by considering the preparations of God leading up to life in the Church of Christ—preparations of ages in the history of redemption, and in the work of creation. The good things are the result of the eternal counsels and everlasting purpose of God. How dare we, then, make light of them?

(2) God will reveal their glory to us in response to the prayer for the help of His Holy Spirit—Who will “enable with perpetual light the dulness of our blinded sight,” Who will open in us those “eyes of the heart” which in his prayer for the Ephesians St. Paul entreated might be enlightened through the spirit of wisdom and revelation, that they might know,

as we need to know, the riches of the glory of His inheritance.

And then we have to do all we can strenuously to lay hold of the good things, not seeing all at once, but waiting for God and yet using His gifts. (a) Seeking for His free forgiveness. (b) Speaking to the unseen Christ as if He were a real Person and taking refuge even from ourselves, our doubts and fears at His feet. (c) And lastly, taking up the privileges of our citizenship in the Church of God which is in our midst, our duties to the brotherhood of the household of Christ, until we get to know and love, not from without, but from our own experience, the things which are freely given us of God.

Yet conceive of them as we may, in our present state, and imagine them as best we can, even with the help of the Spirit, we shall not apprehend the half of their excellence. But we shall know in that day, when the King of glory Himself shall be personally and visibly present with His people, and His servants shall be conformed even in their bodies to His Image of power and beauty, seeing Him as He is, in His everlasting and glorious kingdom.

ADORATION AND SELF-SURRENDER

XVII

“Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father, to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.”—REV. i. 5, 6.

IN the Benediction which immediately precedes this ascription of praise to the risen Christ (grace and peace be unto you . . . from Jesus Christ), Jesus is set side by side with the living God as the source of grace and peace.

And here in this doxology it is to the same Jesus that the glory and dominion for ever unto the ages of the ages is ascribed.

Throughout the book, which may possibly have been written before the fourth gospel, Jesus Christ, invested with all authority in heaven and in earth, is the central dominating figure, whether in the Church below or in the throne of God above; and He is the object of universal worship. In His presence as supreme Judge and Ruler, and as the eternal background of all life,

whether in heaven or earth, the conflict between good and evil is fought out and the development of all history is unfolded until its destined goal is attained.

Now *think what this means*: St. John would undoubtedly shrink with all the horror of a pious Jew from setting a mere man, however holy and great, by the *side of Jehovah*. The great proclamation of their faith had been burnt into the very soul of His people by the captivity—"Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord." When he had his wonderful vision of things that are and that are to come he was actually in Patmos undergoing the punishment of a criminal for refusing to take part in the worship of the Emperor whose cult had practically become the religion of the Roman world. The accused Christian was then required to prove his loyalty to Cæsar by performing an act of religious worship before the statue of the reigning Emperor—probably at this time Domitian. His image was brought into court in readiness for the test; if the accused refused to perform it he was condemned. No other proof was sought. That short and simple procedure was legal, prescribed by imperial in-

structions, and enforced by the Commune or Parliament of the province. All who refused to receive in this way the state religion which in mystical language is "the mark of the beast" or "the number of his name," were proscribed as traitors or outlaws, possessing no rights—yet not deprived, for all that, of part and lot in the "kingdom and tribulation of Jesus Christ."

With such steadfast purpose in his heart never to offer an act of worship to mortal man, St. John's constant protestation that One, on Whose bosom he had leant at the Supper, Whom he had known and loved so intimately as very Man, was "worthy to receive all glory and worship and honour and praise and blessing," could only be based on his absolute certainty that Jesus was actually the Son of God, Lord of lords, the First and the Last.

And St. John came to be convinced of this tremendous fact primarily because of the impression upon his whole being made by His Master's entire personality. It was not any special sign that He gave, or wonder that He wrought, or word He had spoken by *itself*, detached from Himself, but by the whole result of the full

manifestation of His person and life as he pondered on the revelation of the wonderful life.

And then again the beloved disciple had come face to face with his Lord in His risen life. He had realized the effect not of a startling appearance in some strange blinding unearthliness of look, but in the calm quiet fellowship of the great forty days after the first Easter. "IT IS THE LORD" and no other. It is Jehovah—he confessed and worshipped—constrained to come to no other conclusion.

And beyond this he had received with others the gift of the *Spirit*, Who gave eyes to see the reality of the Godhead and to know the Beloved One as Lord and Christ—for no man could really say that Jesus is Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.

But, besides all these converging forces of conviction, there was also the *experience* of the Church, to which he gives utterance in this wonderful *Gloria* of trust and confidence. "Unto Him that loveth us . . . to Him be the *glory* and *dominion*."

And this experience was first of all the experience of His LOVE. His immeasurable love of sacrifice unto death—the love of the Father mani-

fested as personal individual love to each in and through the Incarnate Son living and abiding for ever in His risen humanity. It is interesting and profitable to take note of some of the variations of the reading. In the Authorized Version you have the writer saying, "Who *loved* us," and in the Revised, "Who *loveth* us"—not that the one is the least inconsistent with the other, but the revised reading lays the emphasis rather on His *present* love, wherewith He still loves us to-day with all the love of the Incarnation and Passion and Resurrection; though even the fact of His having so *loved* us once that He gave Himself for us all and for each would mean that He loves us still with the same love now. St. John might have written first, "Who *loved* us," and then said to himself, why should I say "*loved* us"? Surely He loves us now—and so he leaves it—"Unto Him that *loveth* us." It is a love which is the cause of all else that He has done for us or is doing—a perfect love, too, on which we can always fall back. It is a love which you can always be sure of finding strong and faithful here, even when you have failed and faltered, and fall down before His footstool.

Then there is a difference of reading also, without any contradiction, but rather enriching the sense of the fulness of the Divine love in the succeeding term, where the old version speaks of His having "*washed*" us from our sins, and the new of His having *loosed* us. The first dwelling on the great deliverance from the guilt of sins, the second recalling the salvation from its power. In the last chapter of this book there is a corresponding variation, though reversed in the two translations—the one giving as a qualification for access to the Tree of life "Blessed are they who *do His commandments*": and the new reading, "Blessed are *they who wash their robes*." The alteration of a letter or two in the Greek makes the difference in the two renderings. And each brings out a side of the truth which we could ill spare—in either case the grateful heart of the servant of Christ gives glory to Him, Who has done away with both the guilt and the power of sin in the past to come between us and that communion and fellowship with our God which is intended to be the happy experience of the Church of Jesus now.

Having given praise to Him for His love and

His atoning work of grace, the apostle, in the name of the body of Christ, gives Him glory for His exceeding kindness in making us, through the anointing of His Spirit in relation to the world, a *kingdom*, whose citizens are also priests unto God, or, as St. Peter puts it, a royal priesthood, an elect people, a chosen generation, the body of Christ, the Church of God.

Thus, as members of a Divine society, we may, if we *will*, have the right bought for us at a great price of entering into the holiest of all, closer than the angels to the Presence, not only clothed with white raiment, but with kingly crowns on our heads, as worn by the four-and-twenty elders, to cast before the throne as priests. The Church of Christ may be, if it will, the mightiest force in the universe for blessing to the world and for glory to the Lord. By its witness for the truth and by the energy of continual intercession as a body directed by its Divine Head it can be indeed the great power of God.

Of the exceeding dignity of this standing as a kingdom of priests in the world and before God, there must be a strong conviction in the

hearts of Churchmen if we ourselves are to stand fast in the hour of trial and even of tribulation which may be coming upon the Church. Come what may, we must believe that He loves us, quite as much to-day as when He gave Himself for us, that He has power and authority to set us free from the real bondage of sin's guilt and power, and that He means us to worship and serve, not with a languid sentiment, but in the living faith and energy of those whom He has chosen to be His bodyguard, of a kingly priesthood in the day of His power.

"To Him be glory" will be the refrain even of our song in the night.

And so far as we can guide its spirit, and we all can do so in measure, we shall bring it about that the attitude of the Church towards Jesus will be one of worship and adoration. How can it be otherwise? Yet there is undoubtedly a tendency in many directions to be content with a tribute of admiration for Him. And of admiration there is no lack: nor, indeed, of a certain interest in the pictures drawn of our Lord's human life and its conditions. But there can be no question that He does claim and ask for

a great deal more than interest and admiration. "Why callest thou Me good?" "Shall the Son of Man find" not admiration, "but the faith upon earth?"

And with our worship then must be also, if we are to join in such a doxology and ascribe dominion to Him, a right *surrender of the will* unto Him that loveth us—surrender and consecration of our being and all our life outside these walls. Believe me that the days are coming on apace when the most loyal devotion to the living and risen Head of the Church will be called for more than ever. He asks for gifts for Himself from among men—for men and women, too, who will be at His disposal for His kingdom and service at home and abroad, ready, if need be, even to suffer as St. John did for His sake—who will at all events show forth His praise not only with their lips but in their lives, by giving themselves up to His service.

And if there be this attitude of adoration and self-surrender, then we may trust Him with the mysteries of our life and experience. The future of the Church is surely safe with Him who loves it as much now as when He gave Himself for it

on the cross. "Fear not," He would say, "though the Devil is to try some of you. Keep the word of My patience, and I will make those who hate thee know *that I have loved thee.*" And unto Him also we may commit the constantly recurring problems of life to be solved in the light of His appearing. Not now will he tell us all the meaning of His dealings in Providence with ourselves and those around us—the sadness of the world and the horror of its catastrophes. There are the ages of the ages of His glory and dominion in which He will make it plain. Though it is the tribulation of Jesus Christ, often as with St. John, brought about through the folly and crime of man—there is none the less at the heart of it all a *kingdom*, in which they serve as priests who are passing on, having washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb and who will at the last by His grace be wholly loosed from the sins out of which He has saved them, that they may be without fault before the throne.

Unto Him, therefore, I bid you commit yourselves; (1) In response to His abiding love; (2) because you need to be loosed from your sins

and the guilt of the past done away; (3) and because at the very heart of the universe in the wonderful purpose of God there is a place of honour prepared for you, where your song of praise and thanksgiving may be this same doxology in another form.

Thou art worthy : Thou wast slain.

Thou hast redeemed us unto God in Thy blood.

Thou hast made us unto our God Kings and Priests.

NOTES OF THE FAREWELL SERMON

*(Preached by the Bishop of Grahamstown in his Cathedral,
on Sunday evening, May 1, 1898)*

XVIII

“Finally, brethren, farewell.”—2 COR. xiii. 11.

I DID not realize, till I came to consider how I could best get through the last words that I shall speak from this place, how very full the common words of good-bye and farewell, in our own and other languages, are of cheer, and encouragement, and hope. The Latin way of saying “farewell” is : Be valiant ; be hale ; keep well in body as in soul. The last word in the letter written by the apostles at Jerusalem to the Churches, is : Be strong, be vigorous, be robust (Acts xv. 29 ; A.V., “Fare ye well”). Our own words in English are : “Good-bye,” *i. e.* “All good,” or “God be with you” ; and what could be more full of hope and encouragement than that familiar word ? So let our “Farewell” mean : May you fare well in every way ; in body, soul, spirit, may you fare well !

A still more surprising word is that used here

by St. Paul, as it was by our Lord, when He met the women after His resurrection (St. Matt. xxviii. 9), "Rejoice." That is its real meaning, "Rejoice." What, therefore, St. Paul says, is this : "Finally, to sum it all up, to conclude my words of warning and rebuke, and hope—finally, brethren, *rejoice!*"

All these words of farewell speak of the unalterable conviction, deep down in the human heart, that when we part we do not part for ever ; this must not, cannot be ; that here we are only beginning friendship, only beginning to know one another. We must meet again. There will be a great gathering together at His feet, round Whom we form one family and one household, and Who is the one bond of all close union.

"Finally, brethren, farewell," and, indeed, I pray with all my heart that you may fare well :—

(1) Politically, in your country. And what a great country it is becoming ! If only there is hope and faithful service, and patient waiting, great things are in store for it. You and I, as citizens of the British Empire, have a great work to do, if only we do not "despise the day of small things" (see Zech. iv., the first lesson),

if we take care to lay our lines well, broad, and deep, and straight. We belong to "the kingly commonwealth" of the great British Empire; and what may we not do for humanity, for those various races and people who are gathered together under the rule of this kingly commonwealth—free-born citizens, yet subject to order—if only we are prepared more and more to fear God and no one else?

(2) May you fare well, too, in your homes and in this city, where (from my heart I say it) I would still make my home—and a happier home could nowhere else be found—if it were God's will for me that I should stay. It is a fair city, and promises to be fairer still; but if it is to be all that it may well be for you, you must have the heart and spirit to live for one another, all for each and each for all.

Now, if you are to fare well in your country, in your homes and business, in body, soul, and spirit, if your children are to fare well in the future, then I must remind you—for I must be faithful—of some laws and conditions of welfare, in accordance with which we fare well, without which only ill can come. Welfare will come not

only by extending the rule of the British flag, not only by lengthening our lines of railways, not only by securing material comfort, and wealth, not only by bringing in health appliances, though it is our duty and privilege to work for all these things, but only by the fulfilling of two conditions, so simple that you will wonder at my mentioning them, but to-night I can only speak words of utmost simplicity and truth. You must, and I think I speak the mind of the great Master, be good Christians and good Churchmen. To be a good Christian and a good Churchman meant in the old days, in St. Paul's days, to be one and the same thing. If you hold to the Head as a good Christian, how shall you not also be true to the Body? You may not all understand "the Church" in the sense in which I understand it, and I do not ask that you should at once enter into my view of it, but you will, at any rate, accept the idea of a good Christian. To be a good Christian means to be loyal to Christ, to live in fellowship with Him, to co-operate with Him, to have His interests at heart. It means not only to be kindly disposed, to be genial in temper, to be doing no

harm, to be pleasant to all around you, or even to be doing good. All this comes as a matter of course from being a good Christian; but to be a good Christian indeed means to be in right relation to a living Person. It is a *living Person* to Whom you belong, and to Whom you must be true. It is not only a system, a right way of thinking, an exercise of right dispositions, making the life straight and right. That follows, of course, from being right with Christ, from being in living touch with Him; but to be a good Christian means to be devoted to the Lord, to see Him as the living Christ, the Lord standing on the beach, while we are here in the shadows, toiling and rowing, with work which is so often a failure and a disappointment. Not at once must you expect to see Him, perhaps not until you have worked on some time in the Christian life. You must wait for the Vision, seek it, pray for it to the Holy Ghost as we are taught.

Enable with perpetual light
The dulness of our blinded sight.

In the early morning—and let us take comfort in the thought—the apostles *knew not* that it was Jesus standing there; Jesus to whom they owed

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ALL, all that has been given to them of happiness and friendship and trust, all success in work, everything; even the catching of some fish is due to Him alone. Yet they knew Him not till one of clearer sight more tranquil soul, whispered to his fellow apostle, "It is the Lord." It was indeed the Lord; the Lord of living and dead; the Lord of the kind, gentle, strong heart, bringing them out of the darkness; not all at once, not in a mere good-natured wish to save them trouble; no, but letting them go on all night through the darkness, toiling and failing, as if they were not cared for, as if no one were looking after them body or soul. Yet "It is the Lord," and at last it is seen and felt to be the Lord to Whom they belong and to Whom they meant to be loyal to their life's end.

For His sake you must be a good Christian, and a good Churchman too. You have learnt to see something of the blessed heritage we have from the Lord here in our own Church of this province, and through that in our mother Church of England, and, through her, again in the Church of the apostles, "the holy Church throughout all the world." As you look at the

matter calmly and reasonably, you will see more and more what it is to have the steadfastness of Church order in union with the spirit of progress, liberty to go forward. If we are to go forward, we must have lines of truth and order along which the spirit of progress can run; yet there may be wide freedom, ample room for all that the spirit of man demands. The Church is not to be our prison but our home, and if there are many good Christians who are not Churchmen, yet all who wish to be loyal to Christ have at heart a principle of life which will lead them to fulness of vision, and the Lord will reveal to them what is wanting, and union will be brought about in God's own good time. But each Churchman must do what he can to make this Church of ours, wherever it be, in South Africa or England, or in the uttermost islands of the sea, a *living* and a *loving* Church. We must love the brethren within, and we must love those who are not quite one with us as yet, though not with a love that would keep back the truth. As St. Paul assured the Ephesian elders at Miletus, his had been a love which had not shunned to declare unto them "the whole counsel of God."

But we do need more love, love within and love for those who are without; love for the exiles and foreigners about us in this land; love for souls as well as love for Christ; a sense of the joy and privilege of being in the Body, which helps in putting aside, if need be, mere individual blessings in the matter of worship and the conduct of a service, and to consider every man his brother, and what is best for the whole now and here, bearing in mind our past history, our own shortcomings, our falls and backsliding.

Let every man and every woman give indeed, what is possible in the way of money. This ought to be a matter of course, a duty done simply and quietly, without pitiful appeals from us, or frequent urgent insistence. The Church depends on each individual doing his best to contribute for the good, especially of those who are of the household of faith. Money is required as a matter of necessity, but there is also needed counsel, sympathy, friendliness, the feeling that "because I belong to the Body of Christ, this my brother, and this my sister, has a real claim on me." I do not ask you to obliterate social distinctions, but I do ask you to see to it that the

Church is not frost-bound, that there is a more real demonstration of frank brotherliness when opportunity offers. The Church is so much needed as a factor in the development of the best life in this country, the Church whose foundations are rooted in the everlasting hills, and through the midst of which flows the river of life to fertilize the deserts in the land that lies before. But if it is to be and to do this, it must be a living and a loving Church. Fulfil this condition and I do not hesitate to promise you that you will *fare well*.

And now, may I complete the prayer? "Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace."

"Be perfect." Do not be afraid of that word "perfect." "Be ye perfect even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." Keep a high standard; aim high, however you may fail. Keep a high standard and let God do His work. He will do it for ready hearts and souls.

"Be comforted." Do not look on the dark side of things in yourself or in the Church. When offences abound and love grows cold, when, as for Zerubbabel, there is a great moun-

tain in the way, then remember, "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts," and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is comfort and strength.

"Be of one mind." Why not? when God has brought us to oneness of mind here in this place in such a marvellous way. What a witness and token of our oneness was that Communion this morning! What a blessing and power it may be! How can we despair of anything when God has brought us so far in the way of union as He has done already?

And then, "Live in peace." Live in peace, brethren. Let us make for peace; let us speak words of peace, not perpetually critical words, not fault-finding words, especially in regard to Divine things. Be truthful always—peace and truth are what God loves, but make for peace; try on, and be sure you will have help from Him who is the "Author of peace and the Lover of concord." And then, "the God of love and peace," not only the God of power, the God of holiness, the God of glory, the God of heaven and earth, but the God of love and peace shall be with you. Not only love and peace shall be

with you, but the God of love and peace, the God who gave His only begotten Son Who is our peace, the God Who sent His angels to announce the Christmas message of peace and goodwill, the God Who made peace through the cross of His dear Son, the God Who came and preached peace to them that are near and to them that are far off, in and through the risen Christ Who said unto the women, "Rejoice," Who entered into the upper chamber and said to His disciples, "Peace be unto you."

That the God of love and peace may be with you I pray with all my heart; with you in your country, in your Church, in this cathedral. If the God of love and peace is with you who can be against you? who can harm you? It will, indeed, be well with the beloved diocese, with this dear Church, with you my friends most dear, most kind, with you my brethren of the clergy and laity, to whom I owe more than I can say, to whom I shall be profoundly grateful to the end of my days. So shall it be well with you; and so, "finally my brethren, farewell," yea, I will even dare to say, "REJOICE."

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